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Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Provisional agenda and annotations

Provisional agenda

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Annotations

1. Election of officers

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and past practices, the Statistical Commission, at the commencement of its first meeting of a regular session, elects, from among the representatives of its members, a Bureau comprising a Chair, three Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur.

The Bureau is elected on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical distribution, with one member of the Bureau elected from each of the regions represented on the Commission. The Bureau serves for two years, to the extent possible. That duration is achieved by electing the Bureau for a period of one year and re-electing the members of the Bureau who continue to be representatives to the Commission at the following session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

The items on the provisional agenda and the corresponding documentation were proposed by the Commission at its forty-ninth session (New York, 6–9 March 2018) and were adopted by the Council in its decision 2018/227. The Bureau has subsequently approved some changes. The proposed provisional programme of work and timetable for the session is also before the Commission. The Commission is invited to adopt the agenda and the provisional programme of work and timetable for its fiftieth session.

Documentation

Provisional agenda and annotations (E/CN.3/2019/1)

Note by the Secretariat on the provisional programme of work and timetable for the session (E/CN.3/2019/L.1)

3. Items for discussion and decision

(a) Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Commission will have before it the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on the ongoing work for the implementation of the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the report, the Group describes the activities undertaken in 2018 pursuant to Commission decision 49/101, including: (a) tier classification updates and the methodological development of tier III indicators; (b) criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals and best practices; (c) possible proxy indicators to be used for immediate monitoring; (d) activities carried out within the work stream on data disaggregation and by the three working groups, on interlinkages, the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) and geospatial information; and (e) annual refinements of the indicators and planning for the 2020 comprehensive review. The Commission will also have before it the background documents on best practices on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals, prepared jointly by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities; data disaggregation for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators; and interlinkages in the global Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

Points for decision by the Commission include approval of: (a) the criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals; (b) annual refinements of some indicators in the global indicator framework; and (c) the programme of work of the Group for the following year.

The Commission will also have before it the report of the Secretary-General on the work carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with other entities of the United Nations system, in support of the 2030 Agenda. In the report, the Secretary-General describes the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64) on the basis of the data and analysis of the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as mandated by the General Assembly (see resolution 70/1, para. 83). The work undertaken to update the database on the global indicators, including the launch of a new user interface, and to support countries in the implementation of the indicators at the national level is also described. In addition, the Secretary-General presents an update on progress of the work on the principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms, which are provided in a background document; the work on a federated system of national and global data hubs; and the work of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training. A background document sets out the outputs of the Network in detail. The Commission is invited to take note of the work carried out by the Statistics Division in cooperation with the United Nations system and its proposed programme of work and to comment on the progress of work.

The Commission will also have before it the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which a summary of the recent activities of the High-level Group is provided, including: (a) the preparation of a document on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data; (b) consultations on the establishment of a financing mechanism to support the

implementation of the Action Plan and the launch of the Dubai Declaration; (c) the organization of the second United Nations World Data Forum, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 22 to 24 October 2018; and (d) the preparation of a document on a more efficient coordination of the United Nations statistical system. Discussions will be focused on each topic separately.

The Commission will also have before it two background documents, on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and on a more effective and efficient United Nations statistical system in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond.

Points for decision by the Commission include: (a) approval of the Dubai Declaration; (b) review and approval of the recommendations for a more efficient coordination of the United Nations statistical system; and (c) review and approval of the proposed workplan of the High-level Group for 2019.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (E/CN.3/2019/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work on the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/CN.3/2019/3)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.3/2019/4)

(b) Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Friends of the Chair Group on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on open data. The report sets out the results of the work undertaken by the Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles, namely, the global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles; the preparation of a document supplementing the existing guidelines on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles, including an analysis of issues related to non-compliance; and the application of the Fundamental Principles when using non-traditional data sources. The Commission will also have before it a background document presenting the full results of the survey.

The Commission is invited to: (a) discuss the results of the survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles; (b) review and approve the document on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles; and (c) review and approve the proposal to note the work of the Friends of the Chair Group concluded for the current round of reviews and to be resumed in time for the next appraisal, in 2024.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Friends of the Chair Group on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on open data (E/CN.3/2019/5)

(c) Open data

The Commission will have before it the report of the Friends of the Chair Group on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on open data. The report sets out the results of the work undertaken by the Friends of the Chair

Group on open data, namely, on the preparation of a document on the implementation of open data, including the interoperability of data tools, open data practices, the anonymization of data for official statistics and other aspects. The report will also include a mapping of open data principles to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The Commission will also have before it a background document on data interoperability and open data entitled "Data interoperability: a practitioner's guide to joining up data in the development sector".

The Commission is invited to: (a) review and approve the document on the implementation of open data; (b) express its views on the document on data interoperability and open data; and (c) review and approve the proposal to consider the establishment of a working group to continue the work on open data and present its work at the fifty-first session of the Commission.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Friends of the Chair Group on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on open data (E/CN.3/2019/5)

(d) National quality assurance frameworks

The Commission will have before it the report of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks. The report sets out the draft United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics, which contains recommendations on quality assurance, an updated national quality assurance framework, practical guidance for its implementation and reference materials on quality assurance in the global statistical system. The draft manual is available as a background document. In addition, the report sets out the results of a survey on the implementation of a national quality assurance framework in countries and contains a proposal to support countries in the implementation of a national quality assurance framework for the period 2019–2023 and the proposed programme of work of the Expert Group for the following two years. The full results of the survey are provided in a background document. Points for decision by the Commission include: (a) review and endorsement of the new manual; (b) review and approval of the proposed programme of work of the Expert Group; and (c) review and approval of the proposed plan to support countries in the implementation of a national quality assurance framework.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks (E/CN.3/2019/6)

(e) Regional statistical development

The Commission will have before it the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistical development in Asia and the Pacific. In the report, challenges faced by countries in the region with respect to statistics for national, regional and global agendas are summarized. Five action areas given priority by countries to strengthen statistical capacity are also highlighted: engaging users and investing in statistics; assuring quality and instilling trust in statistics; integrated statistics for integrated analysis; modernizing statistical business processes; and developing requisite skill sets.

The report contains a reflection on the future strategic direction for Asia-Pacific collaboration on statistics in areas such as skills development through training

partnerships, joint advocacy efforts for strengthened statistical systems, greater focus on public-private partnerships and innovation, among others.

The Commission is invited to reflect on the issues raised in the report and advise on future collaboration to develop the capacities of national statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistical development in Asia and the Pacific (E/CN.3/2019/7)

(f) National accounts

The Commission will have before it the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts. In the report, the Working Group sets out progress made in addressing important conceptual issues, some of which may extend beyond the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA), and its support for Member States that are lagging behind. The Working Group also provides information on issues emerging from the implementation of SNA, in particular the outcome of the meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, and on progress made with regard to the research agenda on practical issues of implementation of the 2008 SNA and an update on the finalization of publications supporting the implementation of the 2008 SNA. It also contains the programme of work of the Working Group and of the regional commissions, an update on the scope and timeliness of the implementation of SNA at the country level and an update on the international coordination of regional and global data collection and data exchange activities. The Commission is invited to express its views and provide guidance on the elements of the programme of work of the Working Group.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (E/CN.3/2019/8)

(g) Finance statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the review of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics and its substructures. In the report, it is proposed that the responsibilities of the Task Force related to conceptual and methodological issues concerning external debt statistics be transferred to the IMF Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics and that those concerning public sector debt statistics be transferred to the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the IMF Government Finance Statistics Advisory Committee.

The aim of the proposal is to streamline the current configuration, which consists of the Task Force and its three substructures. While methodological issues would be dealt with by the three bodies mentioned above, data management issues would be discussed by a new dedicated working group called the inter-agency working group on debt statistics. The new working group, which is expected to conduct its work electronically, including by videoconference, would focus exclusively on data management and capacity-building. It is expected that the new body will have a rotating chairmanship and will submit a report every two years to the Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics, the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the Government Finance Statistics Advisory Committee. It is also proposed that the work of the Task Force be put on hold until it has been determined

that the new simplified structure and the migration of the programme of work of the Task Force have been successful.

The Commission is invited to express its views and provide guidance on the proposed simplified structure and migration of the work programme on finance statistics.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the International Monetary Fund on the review of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics and its substructures (E/CN.3/2019/9)

(h) International trade and business statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Expert Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics. In the report, the Expert Group summarizes the progress made towards the development of a handbook on accounting for global value chains, which presents a global value chain satellite account through a system of extended national accounts and integrated business statistics from the perspective of the national statistical system. Prepared at the request of the Commission at its forty-sixth session, in 2015, the handbook will provide a measurement framework for international trade and economic globalization. The report also sets out a proposal for the establishment of a high-level group on economic statistics and a related user-centred consultation mechanism through a United Nations global forum on economic statistics. As proposed, the mechanism would serve the Commission in the management and coordination of global economic statistics programmes and provide support to the Commission in response to emerging user demands. The Commission is invited to consider the points for discussion.

The Commission will also have before it the joint report of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers, the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics and the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics. In the report, recent developments regarding the work of the Wiesbaden Group, as presented at its twenty-sixth meeting, held in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in September 2018, and areas of future work of the Group are summarized. In accordance with the request by the Commission at its forty-eighth session, the report will also contain the programme of work and information on the mandate and governance structure of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics, building on the outcome of its first meeting, organized by the Statistics Division and held in Mexico City in May 2018. As part of the report, the work on the international classification of non-tariff measures, which was prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and endorsed by the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications and the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics, is described. The Commission is invited to note the progress of the work of the Wiesbaden Group; endorse the mandate and governance structure and the programme of work of the Committee; endorse the United Nations guidelines for statistical business registers; note the activities of the Inter-Agency Task Force; and endorse the international classification of non-tariff measures.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on International Trade and Economic Globalization Statistics (E/CN.3/2019/10)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the joint report of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers, the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics and the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics (E/CN.3/2019/11)

(i) Industrial statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) on industrial statistics. In the report, UNIDO describes its activities in the field of industrial statistics carried out since the forty-seventh session of the Commission, in 2016, and provides information on capacity-building and training activities undertaken for the implementation of international recommendations for industrial statistics.

In the report, UNIDO describes its role as a custodian agency for the monitoring process for the Sustainable Development Goals. In that context, some activities relating to industrial statistics that were previously undertaken by the Statistics Division are being transferred to UNIDO, which is expected to enable UNIDO to assume full responsibility in that field and thereby streamline data reporting by national statistical offices, which will be only to UNIDO. UNIDO also highlights the difficulties faced in financing industrial statistical activities in developing countries, especially for obtaining timely data for small enterprises required for monitoring the Goals.

The Commission is invited to comment on the issues raised in the report.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization on industrial statistics (E/CN.3/2019/12)

(j) Price statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics. In the report, the Working Group outlines the latest developments and activities in the area of price statistics, in particular progress with regard to updating the *Consumer Price Index Manual*. The Commission is invited to comment on the progress made to date, note that a global consultation on the *Manual* will take place in the first half of 2019 and encourage national price compilers to give a timely response to the consultation.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (E/CN.3/2019/13)

(k) International Comparison Programme

The Commission will have before it the report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme (ICP). In the report, the World Bank outlines the activities undertaken in 2018 at the global, regional and national levels to implement the 2017 comparison cycle and transform ICP into a permanent programme, and describes the governance, capacity-building, research, knowledge and advocacy activities carried out in this regard. The Commission is invited to note the progress made in implementing the 2017 cycle and outstanding risks; urge national, regional and global agencies to complete the 2017 cycle activities without further delay; advise ICP stakeholders to initiate preparations for the 2020 cycle; and impress upon national, regional and global agencies the need to incorporate ICP into their regular statistical work programmes so as to ensure its sustainability as a permanent programme.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the World Bank on the International Comparison Programme (E/CN.3/2019/14)

(l) Environmental-economic accounting

The Commission will have before it the report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. In the report, the Committee of Experts describes the progress made in advancing the following areas of work: (a) coordination; (b) methodological development for normative statistical standards and other research, consisting of (i) the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework and (ii) SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting; (c) development of databases; (d) implementation and statistical capacity-building; and (e) formulation of a statistical response to emerging policy issues, consisting of (i) communication and (ii) SEEA and the Sustainable Development Goal indicators. The Committee of Experts presents progress made in the revision process of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, including the financing of the project, advances in mainstreaming SEEA within global and national initiatives, including those related to the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and biodiversity, the development of global databases compliant with SEEA, progress in implementation and the communication strategy. The Commission is invited to provide its views on the progress of work of the Committee and its programme of work.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (E/CN.3/2019/15)

(m) Disaster-related statistics

The Commission will have before it a report on disaster-related statistics prepared by the Statistics Division in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. As mandated by the Commission at its forty-ninth session, the report contains a discussion of disaster-related statistics and highlights the growing relevance and greater focus of disaster-related statistics, given the importance of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. The report discusses the increased focus on disaster-related statistics and illustrates the need to develop a common position on this important and emerging field of statistics. It elaborates on the growing data demands and needs for disaster-related statistics and takes stock of the current situation of activities around the world, with an emphasis on the constraints faced by developing countries. In the report, the work of the main international and regional organizations active in disaster-related statistics is summarized and it is demonstrated that there is already considerable complementarity, coordination and cooperation taking place on this topic under the purview of the Commission. In this regard, ways to continue to build and strengthen a common statistical framework and a community of practice for disaster-related statistics among the multiple disciplines and areas of expertise involved are also explored in the report. The Commission is invited to express its views on the report and discuss the way forward.

Documentation

Joint report of the Secretary-General, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on disaster-related statistics (E/CN.3/2019/16)

(n) International migration statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Secretary-General on international migration statistics. In the report, the Secretary-General describes recent work undertaken by the Statistics Division and the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics in 2018 to fulfil the requests of the Commission contained in decision 49/101, in terms of: (a) the engagement of the Bureau of the Commission during the negotiation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; and (b) the work of the Division and the Expert Group on methodological development, including on the revision of the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*. Furthermore, the Secretary-General describes other ongoing work, including data and metadata collection and capacity-building, as well as future priorities for the Division and the Expert Group in strengthening international migration statistics. The Commission is invited to comment and provide guidance on the ongoing work and future priorities on migration statistics.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on international migration statistics (E/CN.3/2019/17)

(o) Human settlements statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) on human settlements statistics. It presents progress led by UN-Habitat in the field of human settlements statistics collection and compilation methods and on the development of methodologies and advancements in data collection and reporting on selected human settlements indicators relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals. A recommendation is given on improving monitoring and reporting on human settlements indicators for national statistical offices.

The Commission is invited to endorse the national sample of cities methodology for countries that are constrained in national monitoring and reporting on all their cities; endorse the establishment of a group of experts for the revision of the guidelines and principles for the implementation of the City Prosperity Index; endorse the establishment of a group of experts for the development of guidelines for identifying slums; comment on challenges relating to the definition of cities; and comment on the coordination mechanism for work on human settlements statistics at the international level.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on human settlements statistics (E/CN.3/2019/18)

(p) Crime statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on crime statistics. Since the forty-fourth session of the Commission, in 2013, major progress has been made in accomplishing the objectives in all areas of

the road map to improve the quality and availability of crime statistics at the national and international levels. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework in 2017, work on crime and criminal justice statistics has been given priority in relation to Sustainable Development Goal indicators on security, violence, trafficking, access to justice and corruption.

In the report, besides reviewing activities and accomplishments since the issuance of the previous report, in 2015, the Office will describe existing challenges and future activities to be undertaken, including the development of new methodologies to measure illicit financial flows and sexual harassment and the provision of technical support to countries and regions to implement surveys (for example, on corruption and crime victimization) and to improve administrative data to align them with the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes.

The Commission is invited to comment on challenges and provide advice on planned activities that will shape the second phase of implementation of the road map to improve crime and criminal justice statistics at the national, regional and global levels.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on crime and criminal justice statistics (E/CN.3/2019/19)

(q) Drugs and drug use statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on drugs and drug use statistics. The report contains a review of steps taken to implement the road map to improve drug statistics discussed at the forty-eighth session of the Commission, in 2017. In particular, the Office started to review data collection tools and activities to support Member States in strengthening their capacity to produce and analyse drug statistics at the national level.

The report also contains a review of activities, accomplishments and future challenges to improve drug statistics and ways to further strengthen the collaboration between the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, including in relation to the revision process of international data collection on drugs.

The Statistical Commission is invited to provide advice on planned activities and on ways to further strengthen its collaboration with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and promote the role of national statistical systems in the production of drug data.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on drugs and drug use statistics (E/CN.3/2019/20)

(r) Education statistics

The Commission will have before it the report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on education statistics. The Institute is the official source of cross-nationally comparable data on education: it is mandated to work with partners to develop new indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to assess progress made in meeting Sustainable Development Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In the report, information is provided on recent developments in international education statistics, in particular in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with regard to standards, methodologies, data collection and funding gaps, including financial aid. The 2030 Agenda requires high-

quality, timely and disaggregated statistics to respond to new data needs and emerging challenges. The report includes information on the initiative of the Institute to improve coordination and to implement global efforts to strengthen the capacity of national educational statistical systems. This involves expanding its current mandate to include brokerage with the goal of improving the coordination of the investments of donors and countries. The Commission is invited to express its views and provide guidance on the pillars of the approach and lines of action proposed by the Institute with regard to this new "brokerage" role to support more integrated, better-quality, cost-effective and timely statistical data for education at the national level.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on education statistics (E/CN.3/2019/21)

(s) Working methods of the Statistical Commission

The Commission will have before it the report of the Bureau on working methods. In the report, the Bureau describes the comprehensive review of the structure and functions of groups operating under the auspices of the Commission. The Bureau takes stock of all existing groups and highlights the need for streamlining existing arrangements to achieve more coherent and coordinated working methods and, in this sense, puts forward possible actions by the Commission. The report is accompanied by two background documents: a summary table of the comprehensive review of groups and a graphical presentation of the groups currently operating under the auspices of the Commission.

The Commission is invited to reflect on the governance issues of the groups and give guidance with a view to achieving coherent arrangements.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Bureau on working methods: comprehensive review of the structure and functions of groups (E/CN.3/2019/22)

4. Items for information

The following items are presented to the Commission for information. Limited time will be allocated for interventions under this item.

(a) Demographic statistics

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Secretary-General presenting activities carried out by the Statistics Division in the area of demographic statistics. In the report, the Secretary-General provides a yearly summary of the implementation of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme, with a focus on the contemporary methods for conducting population and housing censuses, including real-time and conventional editing of census records for the current population and housing census round. The Secretary-General provides information on activities relating to the promotion of the revised set of international statistical standards for civil registration and vital statistics and the development of handbooks on the legal framework and on communication for the development of civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems. The Secretary-General also provides information on the collection of demographic statistics through the *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaires. The summary overview of an expert group meeting on the use of contemporary methodology for the delineation of urban and

rural areas is also presented. The Secretary-General also provides an update on the development of and related activities of the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data, which was established at the forty-ninth session of the Commission. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on demographic statistics (E/CN.3/2019/23)

(b) Health statistics

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the World Health Organization (WHO) outlining its work on health statistics in relation to monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and its new monitoring framework to track progress towards the "triple billion" targets – 1 billion more people better protected from health emergencies, 1 billion more people benefiting from universal health coverage and 1 billion more people enjoying better health and well-being, all by 2023 – with those targets being key milestones towards the achievement of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. Working closely with national statistical offices, WHO will support countries in filling key data gaps. Committed to leaving no one behind, WHO will continue its work on the disaggregation of data to address health inequalities. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the World Health Organization on health statistics (E/CN.3/2019/24)

(c) Household surveys

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys. In the report, the Group provides a summary of the recent activities it has undertaken and presents an analysis of how household surveys can be used to provide data for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, with a particular emphasis on leaving no one behind. Furthermore, the Group provides an overview of future activities it plans to undertake. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys (E/CN.3/2019/25)

(d) Price indices

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Ottawa Group on Price Indices. In the report, the Ottawa Group provides an update on its recent activities and an outline of its plans. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Ottawa Group on Price Indices (E/CN.3/2019/26)

(e) Big data for official statistics

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics. The Global Working Group responds to the

requests made by the Commission at its previous session, in particular by making products and services available to the global statistical community on the global platform for data, services and applications, by addressing concerns on privacy and confidentiality and by providing further details on the business model of the platform in a background document. The platform is a research and development environment for sharing and testing trusted methods, trusted data and trusted training materials and offers technology infrastructure and services for official statistics together with the private sector, academia and civil society. Furthermore, the various task teams of the Global Working Group (on earth observation, mobile phone, social media and scanner data and on privacy preserving techniques) conducted training workshops, prepared handbooks and collaborated on innovative projects. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics (E/CN.3/2019/27)

(f) Statistical capacity development

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity development, in which the Secretary-General provides an overview of the recent activities undertaken by the Statistics Division in support of countries' efforts to strengthen their national statistical capacity to better respond to the data challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Secretary-General also provides updates on new and continuing collaborative efforts for synchronizing initiatives, leveraging partnerships and coordination in the area of statistical capacity-building. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity development (E/CN.3/2019/28)

(g) Common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata

The Commission will have before it, for information, the progress report of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors, in which the achievements and planned activities relating to the development and implementation of common standards on data and metadata sharing are summarized. The standards are for data in areas such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and international trade statistics, among others. An overview of achievements of and plans for capacity development in the area of data and metadata exchange is also included. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the progress report of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors (E/CN.3/2019/29)

(h) Coordination of statistical programmes

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, in which the work undertaken by the Committee in 2018 is summarized, including the main conclusions of the thirty-first and thirty-second sessions of the Committee, held in 2018. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (E/CN.3/2019/30)

(i) Integration of statistical and geospatial information

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information on its recent activities. In its report, the Expert Group provides information on the progress towards the finalization of the five principles of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework and the adoption of the Expert Group's short- and longer-term statistical-geospatial interoperability projects by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management at its eighth session, convened in August 2018. The Commission is invited to note the development of the five principles of the Framework and the Expert Group's progress on the development and implementation of the Framework.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information (E/CN.3/2019/31)

(j) Follow-up to the policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

The Commission will have before it, for information, the report of the Secretary-General on policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission, containing extracts from resolutions, decisions and agreed conclusions adopted by the Assembly, the Council and other functional commissions that are relevant to the work of the Commission. The report also contains a description of the actions taken to date by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division and those suggested to be taken in response to the decisions and mandates of the parent bodies. The Commission may wish to take those actions into account in its discussions under relevant agenda items. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2019/32)

5. Programme questions (Statistics Division)

The Commission will receive an oral report from the Director of the Statistics Division concerning current activities, plans and priorities.

6. Provisional agenda and dates for the fifty-first session of the Commission

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure, the Commission will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its fifty-first session, together with an indication of the documents to be submitted under each item. The Commission will also have before it a proposal for the dates of the session. In accordance with a request of the Council (see Council resolution 1999/51), the Commission will have before it a draft multi-year programme of work for the period 2019–2023. The Commission is invited to approve the dates, provisional agenda and documentation for its fifty-first session, as well as to approve the multi-year programme of work.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat containing the draft provisional agenda for the fifty-first session of the Commission (E/CN.3/2019/L.2)

Note by the Secretariat on the draft multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission, 2019–2023 (E/CN.3/2019/33)

7. Report of the Commission on its fiftieth session

The Commission will have before it the procedural report of the fiftieth session of the Commission covering organizational matters relating to the Commission's work. The Commission will also have before it an informal paper containing the draft decisions submitted by the Rapporteur.

The Commission is invited to adopt the draft report on its fiftieth session, including the draft decisions, which will be submitted to the Council, and to entrust the Rapporteur with streamlining and finalizing it.

Documentation

Draft report of the Commission on its fiftieth session

Informal paper with draft decisions

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on the ongoing work for the implementation of the global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In its report, the Expert Group describes the activities undertaken in 2018 pursuant to Statistical Commission decision 49/101, including: (a) tier classification updates and the methodological development of tier III indicators; (b) criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals and best practices; (c) possible proxy indicators for some of the tier III indicators to be used for immediate monitoring; (d) activities within the work stream on data disaggregation and the three working groups on interlinkages, Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) and geospatial information, respectively; and (e) annual refinements of the indicators and plan for the 2020 comprehensive review. The Commission will also have before it background documents on: best practices on data flows and global data reporting for Sustainable Development Goals, prepared jointly by the Expert Group and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities; data disaggregation for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators; and interlinkages in the global Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

The Statistical Commission is invited to comment on progress made by the Expert Group and the direction of future work. The points for discussion by the Commission are set out in paragraph 33 of the present report.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

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I. Introduction

1. As mandated in General Assembly resolution 70/1, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators was tasked with the development and implementation of the global indicator framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Expert Group developed a global indicator framework, which was adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, on 6 July 2017, in resolution 71/313 on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The present report describes the work carried out by the Expert Group from March 2018 to December 2018 for the implementation of the global indicator framework, on the basis of the work programme agreed by the Commission and in accordance with Statistical Commission decision 49/101.

II. Implementation of the global indicator framework

3. In 2018, the Group held two physical meetings, each attended by 150–200 representatives from member countries, observer countries, international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. Between meetings, the Group also continued to interact electronically and through teleconferences between meetings.

4. The seventh meeting, hosted by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, was held in Vienna from 9 to 12 April 2018. The eighth meeting, hosted by Statistics Sweden and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, was held in Stockholm from 5 to 8 November 2018. At those two meetings, the Group discussed progress made on the methodological development of tier III indicators, and reviewed and updated the tier classification; reviewed annual refinements for a few selected indicators; discussed the proposed criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals and shared best practices; discussed data disaggregation required for the indicators; discussed possibly proxy indicators for tier III indicators; discussed guiding principles for the 2020 comprehensive review; reviewed the work of the three working groups; and shared experiences on Sustainable Development Goal implementation and reporting at the national, regional, global and thematic levels. In addition, several WebEx meetings were held over the course of the year to advance the work on tier reclassification.

A. Tier classification updates and the methodological development of tier III indicators

5. In accordance with the mechanism for updating the classification of the indicators, the Expert Group reviewed the tier classification of the indicators at its seventh and eighth meetings and at several virtual meetings held throughout the year. The Group focused on tier III indicators for which sufficient advancements in methodological development had been achieved, and all tier I and II indicators based on data availability at the global and regional levels.

6. Significant progress has been made in the methodological development of many tier III indicators. As a result, the Expert Group considered many requests for the tier reclassification of tier III indicators. In advance of the meetings of the Group, agencies were invited to provide supporting documents for the reclassification of tier III indicators at least one month before the meeting. At the seventh meeting of the Group, six tier III indicators were reviewed and reclassified as tier II. At the eighth

meeting of the Group, an additional 14 tier III indicators or subindicators were reviewed for reclassification and were reclassified as tier II. The Group also reviewed and reclassified five additional tier III indicators at two virtual meetings in September 2018. The Group provided feedback to custodian agencies on those indicators that could not be reclassified, indicating the specific methodological work that would need to be conducted before reclassification could be reconsidered.

7. Given the urgency of reclassifying the remaining tier III indicators, the Expert Group will review additional tier reclassification requests at virtual meetings from December 2018 to February 2019 and will continue to review the reclassification requests at its two physical meetings in 2019 and at virtual meetings throughout the year. An update on the reclassification of tier III indicators will be provided orally at the introduction of the present report to the Commission. Custodian agencies are required to submit all the required documentation for the reclassification requests at least one month in advance of the meetings so that the members of the Group have sufficient time to review all documents.

8. In accordance with the approved work programme of the Expert Group, a review of the availability of data for tier I and II indicators was conducted. The data availability of all tier I and II indicators in the global indicator database as at 31 August 2018 was reviewed to assess country and population coverage for each region where those indicators were relevant. The assessment concluded that two tier I indicators did not have sufficient data coverage, and should therefore be moved to tier II, and that eight tier II indicators met the criteria to be moved to tier I.

9. In accordance with its work programme (see E/CN.3/2017/2, para. 35 (a)), the Expert Group continued the review of workplans for tier III indicators and requested all custodian agencies to submit revised workplans with detailed timelines for the completion of methodological work and the commencement of data collection activities. Updated workplans were received for almost all tier III indicators and are available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/tierIII-indicators/. Throughout the year, the Group conducted a thorough review of tier III workplans, flagging any issues in the current methodological work, in particular for those referring to targets with a 2020 deadline. Workplans are still missing for a few indicators that remain without a custodian agency. If an indicator remains without a custodian agency, the Group has indicated that it may be refined or removed at the comprehensive review in 2020.

10. According to the updates to the tier classification following the reviews, as at 6 December 2018, out of the 232 indicators, 101 are tier I indicators, 81 are tier II, 44 are tier III and 6 are multiple tiers (i.e., different components of the indicator are classified into different tiers). The Group expressed concern that more than 50 per cent of indicators for Sustainable Development Goals 12 and 13 are tier III indicators (the development of the tier III indicators for Goal 13 is on hold pending the conclusion of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in December 2018). The methodological progress for the remaining tier III indicators is quite advanced and it is expected that, by March 2019, methodological work will be completed for more than half of the remaining tier III, leaving only about 20 tier III indicators. Almost half of those 20 tier III indicators are orphan indicators or indicators where the methodological development has stalled. The Expert Group has worked to identify proxies for some of those indicators and will review the indicators in detail during 2019 and possibly propose replacements and/or refined indicators as part of the 2020 comprehensive review. The Secretariat will continue to update the tier classification information soon after the reclassification review takes place, and the latest information can be found at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/.

B. Criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals and best practices

11. In accordance with Statistical Commission decision 49/101 (g), the Expert Group was tasked to work jointly with custodian agencies and establish a fruitful dialogue between all parties, to further refine the guidelines by taking into account concerns raised at the forty-ninth session of the Commission and to prepare criteria for implementation of the guidelines that are based on best practices and on ways to limit the burden that the envisaged procedures may represent in terms of time and resources for both national and international statistical systems and that resolve outstanding issues. As agreed by the Commission at its forty-ninth session, seven members of the Group and four members of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities worked to develop a document on criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of implementing the guidelines prepared by the Group.[1] The co-chairs of both the Group and the Committee led the process of developing the document. It was reviewed by both the Group and the Committee and presented at the eighth meeting of the Group. The document is contained in annex I of the present report.

12. The Expert Group is also developing a report on best practices on data flows and global data reporting. An initial draft will be finalized by mid-February and will be available to the Commission as a background document. It will be a living document, to be updated as new best practices are identified. The best practices presented in the document were taken from several key inputs provided to the Group, including: (a) a series of case studies conducted by the Group in 2017 on data flows and data reporting from the national to regional and international levels, for seven representative global indicators; (b) data flow pilot studies prepared under the auspices of the Conference of European Statisticians steering group on statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals; (c) a series of case studies on best practices for data flows conducted in five African countries by Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania. The results from the studies were shared with the Group at its eighth meeting, and key results from them will be incorporated into the background document.

13. In addition, the Secretariat has continued to update the data collection calendars, the list of focal points for Sustainable Development Goal indicators in custodian agencies and the list of Sustainable Development Goal data contact persons in national statistical offices. The former two are available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/. The latter is shared by the Secretariat directly with custodian agencies to ensure that national statistical offices are kept informed, via email, when custodian agencies are collecting, processing and disseminating data for Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

C. Existing indicators as proxies for immediate use to monitor targets

14. The Statistical Commission, in its decision 49/101 (d), requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to consider the feasibility of using tentative existing indicators as proxies for immediate use to monitor targets while tier III indicators are being finalized. The Expert Group began that work by identifying priority targets and goals where proxies were most needed. Those included targets with a 2020 deadline,

[1] Available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/49th-session/documents/BG-Item-3a-IAEG-SDGs-DataFlowsGuidelines-E.pdf.

all means of implementation targets, and Goals 12–14 because of the number of tier III indicators that currently exist to monitor those Goals. The group then reviewed indicator proposals for the targets and identified an initial list of proxies. The initial list was shared with members of the Group, and subsequently with custodian agencies, to gauge interest in the proxies and to determine whether any of the proposed proxy indicators had an agreed methodology and available data.

15. As a result of those consultations and the discussion that took place at the eighth meeting, the Expert Group developed an initial list of global proxies to monitor indicators that are currently tier III, which are available at the website of the Expert Group at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/.

III. Work stream on data disaggregation

16. The Statistical Commission, in its decision 49/101 (e), requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to clearly determine the dimensions and categories of data disaggregation required for the indicators in the framework, keeping in mind the resources needed and the key principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of no one left behind. Throughout 2018, the Expert Group continued its work on identifying the dimensions and categories of data disaggregation for the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators on the basis of the minimum disaggregation requirements in the 2030 Agenda and taking into consideration the available data. The Expert Group has also worked on the compilation of existing standards and tools for data disaggregation that can be used as a reference for future work.

17. On 9 November 2018, a one-day working meeting with members of the Expert Group, custodian agencies and other stakeholders was held to discuss issues related to data disaggregation and the preparation of a background document to be submitted to the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission. At the meeting, it was agreed that the Group would consult with specialized groups on policy priorities concerning their respective populations (including, for instance, people with disability, migrants, refugees and older people) and reach out to custodian agencies on the disaggregation dimensions and categories for Sustainable Development Goal global indicators where relevant. It was further agreed that an initial proposal would be developed by the Group and then be put forward in an open consultation before the document is submitted to the Commission as a background document in February 2019.

IV. Working groups of the Expert Group

18. Three working groups were established by the Expert Group in March 2016, focusing on the following topics: statistical data and metadata exchange, geospatial information and interlinkages. Each working group is composed of members of the Group and other invited representatives, as determined by their respective terms of reference.[2] A brief summary of the work of each group in 2018 and descriptions of future meetings and work is provided below.

A. Working group on statistical data and metadata exchange

19. The working group on statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX) consists of 12 country members and 10 international agency members and is chaired by

[2] The terms of reference, membership and other important information of each working group can be found at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/.

Colombia. The working group released the first pilot data structure definition in February 2018 and undertook a pilot Sustainable Development Goal data exchange between countries and custodian agencies from March to September 2018. To facilitate the pilot data exchange, the United Nations Statistics Division also built a prototype data exchange web site, SDG Data Labs.

20. In addition to monthly teleconferences, the group held its third meeting in October 2018, at which it reviewed the pilot data exchange and took note of lessons learned. In the first half of 2019, the working group plans to finalize and release the first official Sustainable Development Goal-data structure definition; develop a data structure definition maintenance schedule; set up a production data exchange; and release draft metadata structure definitions. In the second half of 2019, the group plans to develop guidelines on using and customizing the Sustainable Development Goal-data structure definition for national use and participation in the data exchange; build national capacity; pilot metadata exchange; and conduct outreach to countries and custodian agencies beyond the working group.

B. Working group on geospatial information

21. The working group on geospatial information currently consists of 17 country members and 6 international agency members (see the working group website at http://ggim.un.org/UNGGIM-wg6/). The group, co-chaired by Mexico and Sweden, held its fifth meeting in Nairobi from 5 to 8 December 2018. The group also presented a report to the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management on geospatial information for sustainable development.

22. The working group has two task streams, both with a proposed timeline of 2018–2019. The first task stream focuses on the disaggregation of statistical data by geographic location and aggregation of geocoded unit-level data. The group plans to compile best practices on disaggregation by geographic location and aggregation of geocoded unit level data and prepare technical guidance on concepts and methodologies for data disaggregation by geographic location. The second task stream focuses on the availability and application of production-ready satellite earth observation data for the production of indicators. The group will compile best practices and case studies at the national level and prepare technical guidance on concepts and methodologies for the integration of satellite earth observation data into the production of indicators.

23. At the eighth meeting, the Expert Group expressed the concern that the Group was not sufficiently connected to the work of the working group and that there must be an increase in interaction with the statistical community. The recommendation to include a few of the members of the Group (the same representatives as those in the working group) was welcomed and accepted by the working group.

C. Working group on interlinkages

24. The working group on interlinkages currently consists of 11 country members and 8 representatives from academia, international and regional organizations and civil society organizations. The group is co-chaired by Canada and China and conducts most of its meetings via WebEx and through e-mail.

25. The working group has prepared a background document that will be submitted in early February 2019 to the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission. The background document incorporates early interlinkages work undertaken by the group, results of the global and internal consultations, best practices from countries and

organizations and an initial integrated analysis of the economic, social and environmental developments to support policy. During 2019, the group plans to work on a second report that looks at the interlinkages between the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Sustainable Development Goals, while also examining the interlinkages between policy and legislation and a deeper examination of the integrated analysis in support of effective policymaking.

V. Annual refinements and plan for the 2020 comprehensive review

26. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/313 and the plan and criteria agreed by the Expert Group with respect to possible annual minor refinements,[3] the Group reviewed the list of indicators proposed by its members for possible refinements. At its eighth meeting, the Group reviewed six refinements (see annex II).

27. Also at the eighth meeting, the Expert Group agreed on general guiding principles, criteria and a timeline for the 2020 comprehensive review. The 2020 comprehensive review is an opportunity to improve the indicator framework to help the global monitoring of the 2030 agenda and to provide the necessary guidance to countries, many of which are already well advanced in implementing their national framework and reporting platforms. The Expert Group agreed on several guiding principles for the review in order to set the parameters within which the review would take place. The principles include the following: the review needs to take into account investments already made at the national and international levels and should not undermine ongoing efforts; the revised framework should not significantly impose an additional burden on national statistical work; there should be space for improvements, while at the same time ensuring that the changes are limited in scope and the size of the framework remains the same; the focus of the Group's common work should remain on the implementation of the framework in countries for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

28. In addition to those more general guiding principles, the group agreed that the 2020 comprehensive review would consider the global indicator framework and would include the replacement, deletion, refinement or adjustment of some indicators and, in a few select cases, additional indicators only when: (a) the current indicator(s) did not map well to the target or track the target well; (b) an additional indicator was needed to cover a critical aspect of the target or goal; and/or (c) the methodological development of a tier III indicator had stalled or not produced the expected results.

29. The specific criteria for the implementation of the review are as follows:

(a) An additional indicator may be considered only in exceptional cases when a crucial aspect of a target is not being monitored by the current indicator(s) or to address a critical or emerging new issue that is not monitored by the existing indicators, or when a whole Goal has very few tier I or tier II indicators for the follow-up;

(b) A deletion will be considered when the methodological work of a tier III indicator has stalled or has not produced the expected results, and a replacement will be proposed if the deleted indicator is the only indicator monitoring the corresponding target;

[3] See E/CN.3/2017/2, para. 21.

(c) Adjustments or replacements will be considered when the indicator does not map well to the target or does not track the target well;

(d) The proposed indicator must have an agreed methodology and available data (tier III indicator proposals will not be considered) and be suitable for global monitoring;

(e) The aim of the review will be to maintain the same number of indicators currently in the framework in order not to alter significantly the original framework, which is already being implemented in most countries and not to increase the reporting burden on national statistical systems.

30. The proposed timeline for the comprehensive review is as follows: (a) by March 2019 the Group will prepare a review framework containing possible deletions, replacements, adjustments and additions, based on previous analysis and assessments, with assistance from the Secretariat; (b) at its ninth meeting, in March 2019, the Group will conduct a final progress review of tier III indicators to determine whether they can be maintained in the list or deleted; (c) between May and July 2019, an open consultation will be held on the preliminary list of possible deletions, adjustments, replacements and additions, and by September 2019 the Group will review the results of the consultations; (d) by the end of November 2019 the Group will prepare the final proposal for the 2020 review and submit it to the Commission for its consideration at the fifty-first session in March 2020.

VI. Work programme of the Expert Group

31. It is suggested that the Expert Group carry out the following activities between March 2019 and March 2020:

(a) Continue the review of workplans for tier III indicators and reclassify indicators when requirements are met, at the physical meetings and via open WebEx meetings, in accordance with the calendar agreed by the group;

(b) Carry out the comprehensive review on replacement, deletion, refinement or adjustment of indicators and, in a few selected cases, additional indicators, and prepare proposals for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its fifty-first session in 2020;

(c) Continue the work stream on data disaggregation in order to provide further guidelines and liaise with the other working groups (i.e., SDMX, geospatial information) for the data disaggregation work;

(d) Continue the work of the three working groups, on statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX), geospatial information and interlinkages and review the workplans of the working groups to ensure that they are in line with the work of the Expert Group;

(e) Continue to identify best practices for the data flows between countries and custodian agencies to be shared on the website of the Expert Group and

(f) Hold two meetings, the first in the first quarter of 2019 and the second in the fourth quarter of 2019, on dates to be determined, and continue to interact electronically and through teleconferences, as needed.

32. There will also be a rotation of members of the Expert Group that will take place in May 2019 in accordance with the terms of reference of the Group.[4] The rotation will be led by the respective regional mechanisms.

VII. Points for discussion

33. **The Statistical Commission is invited to:**

(a) **Take note of the work conducted by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators in response to the decisions of the Commission;**

(b) **Express its views and adopt the criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals as contained in annex I;**

(c) **Express its views and adopt the six annual refinements in the global indicator framework as contained in annex II;**

(d) **Express its views on the guiding principles and criteria for the 2020 comprehensive review;**

(e) **Express its views on the background documents on data disaggregation and interlinkages;**

(f) **Express its views and adopt the proposed work programme of the Expert Group for 2019.**

[4] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/IAEG-SDGs%20Terms%20of%20Reference_2017.pdf.

Annex I

Criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals

Commissioned by the United Nations Statistical Commission, the present paper focuses on statistical data flows for global reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, while it is recognized that non-statistical indicators are also necessary to monitor such progress. The non-statistical indicators in the global framework are not within the competence of national statistical offices as data providers and validators, although national statistical offices may still act as national administrative coordinators of Sustainable Development Goal reporting as a whole, including for non-statistical indicators. To delineate clearly the scope of the following guidelines, it will therefore be necessary to establish a list of non-statistical global Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

Background

In its resolution 71/313 on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the General Assembly stated on 6 July 2017 that it:

(a) Adopted the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, as a voluntary and country-led instrument, that will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be developed by Member States;

(b) Stressed that official statistics and data from national statistical systems constitute the basis needed for the global indicator framework, recommended that national statistical systems explore ways to integrate new data sources into their systems to satisfy new data needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as appropriate, and also stressed the role of national statistical offices as the coordinator of the national statistical system;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to continue to facilitate collaboration between national statistical systems and the relevant international and regional organizations to enhance data reporting channels and ensure the harmonization and consistency of data and statistics for the indicators used to follow up and review the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, within existing resources;

(d) Stressed that all activities of the global statistical system must be conducted in full adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6.

At its forty-ninth session in March 2018, the United Nations Statistical Commission (see E/2018/24) welcomed efforts by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to improve data flows and global reporting, and also welcomed the draft guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals as an initial step to improve coordination and harmonization of national and international data systems and to ensure full transparency of data, metadata and data aggregates presented in the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database; and requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to work jointly with custodian agencies and establish a fruitful dialogue between all parties, to further refine the guidelines by taking into account concerns raised at the forty-ninth session of the Commission and to prepare criteria for implementation of the guidelines based on best practices and on ways to limit the burden that the envisaged procedures may represent in terms

of time and resources for both national and international statistical systems and that resolve outstanding issues.

The present document is hence intended to establish criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals prepared by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators. However, it should be clear that it is a living document and further additions will be made as new best practices emerge.

I. Overarching objective: statistical indicators for the monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals should meet the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

All activities of the global statistical system must be conducted in full adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6 and, in the case of international and supranational statistical agencies, also the principles governing international statistical activities. In particular, Member States and international and supranational statistical agencies should:

(a) Utilize only concepts, definitions, classifications, sources, methods and procedures that meet professional and scientific standards;

(b) Document fully and make available data sources and estimation or adjustment methods, in a manner that ensures the transparency of the methodology and the replicability and trust of the estimates;

II. Commitment of international and supranational statistical agencies

As custodian agencies, international and supranational statistical agencies have accountability for the quality and accuracy of global reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to maximize quality, transparency and trust in the global reporting and adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and principles governing international statistical activities, custodian agencies should:

1. Base the compilation of the international series for Sustainable Development Goal indicators on national official data sources in all cases where national statistical systems produce and release data or national estimates that are consistent with agreed indicator definitions and agreed international statistical standards.

2. Consult with national statistical systems in identifying the most appropriate statistical methods and data sources, exclusively based on professional, scientific and statistically robust considerations and internationally agreed statistical standards. National statistical offices will be notified on those consultations.

3. Provide an opportunity, within a reasonable time frame, for national statistical authorities to review country-specific data and estimates of Sustainable Development Goal indicators prior to their release.

4. Ensure that data sources and methods are thoroughly documented and fully transparent to the public and in particular to national data providers in order to facilitate validation and the replicability of the data.

5. Adequately explain possible discrepancies between national and international data.

6. Provide complete and detailed metadata and methodological guidance in a timely manner to national statistical systems and indicate changes made to these.

7. Provide technical assistance to Member States, through their national statistical offices, if requested, to improve the national reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicators and the application of agreed international standards.

8. Ensure ongoing dialogue with Member States on the national data reported for global monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular when there are disagreements with regard to national data sources and country-specific estimates. Dialogue should focus on maximizing scientific rigour, international comparability, coherence and the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

9. Minimize the data reporting burden of national statistical systems by utilizing existing reporting mechanisms or national reporting platforms for Sustainable Development Goal indicators whenever possible, promoting the use of appropriate data transmission standards and tools, such as Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) and web application program interfaces.

10. Coordinate the data collection work of international and supranational statistical agencies and establish effective and efficient data sharing arrangements among them to avoid duplication of efforts.

11. In order to enhance the coordinating role of the national statistical office within the national statistical system and ensure the quality of country-specific data, international and supranational statistical agencies will copy the national statistical office in their data requests in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals and provide the national statistical office with a list of all national data providers and the data collection calendar.

12. International and supranational statistical agencies will only address data requests to countries regarding a specific Sustainable Development Goal indicator if they are the designated custodian agency. In cases where more than one such agency is designated as custodian agency, data shall be collected through common means, such as joint questionnaires.

13. Data collected by the custodian agencies shall be released publicly and shared, in a timely manner and at no cost, with the Statistics Division and other international and supranational statistical agencies that may be interested in the data for other reasons, such as for thematic reporting.

14. Estimates of Sustainable Development Goal indicators published in databases maintained by international and supranational statistical agencies shall be properly documented and sourced, with the provision of clear and comprehensive metadata.

15. Maximize data availability by supporting open data access and public sharing of data pertaining to Sustainable Development Goal indicators, by both international and supranational statistical agencies, and national statistical offices and national statistical systems.

16. Support developing countries, in particular African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems.

III. Member States' commitment

Member States have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. National statistical systems are the primary source of data and statistics for Sustainable Development Goal global reporting, and the quality of the data and statistics they report to international and supranational statistical agencies has a major impact on the overall quality of global reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicators. In order to maximize accuracy, transparency and trust in global reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States should:

17. Produce the underlying data for global Sustainable Development Goal indicators based on internationally agreed definitions and standards.

18. Provide necessary data and metadata for global reporting to custodian agencies in a timely manner and according to quality standards through existing reporting mechanisms or national Sustainable Development Goal indicator reporting platforms whenever possible.

19. When data do not meet international standards, submit the necessary methodological information to allow international and supranational statistical agencies to adjust statistics to ensure international coherence and comparability.

20. Review the information provided by custodian agencies and notify agencies if any issues are identified.

21. Ensure ongoing dialogue with custodian agencies on national data reported for global monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals, in particular when there are disagreements related to national data sources and country-specific estimates. Dialogue should focus on maximizing scientific rigour, international comparability, coherence and the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

22. Pursue support for strengthening data collection and capacity-building in their own countries.

IV. Role of the national statistical office

In their capacity as data producers and as coordinators of their national statistical systems, national statistical offices have accountability for the quality and accuracy of global reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Within a country, the national statistical office is often mandated also to provide quality assurance for the statistical data produced by other national data-producing entities, although some national statistics may remain under the supervision of specialized institutions. Arrangements for data reporting from national statistical systems to international and supranational statistical agencies vary considerably across agencies and countries. National statistical offices are the national data providers for many international and supranational statistical agencies. Depending on the governance structure of each such agency, Member States may have designated other authorities, typically in line ministries, as providers of national data. In such cases, internal coordination within the national statistical system is of utmost importance.

While respecting the existence of different data reporting arrangements among international and supranational statistical agencies, national statistical offices and other actors in the national statistical system, Member States and custodian agencies

should promote the coordinating role of national statistical offices in reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals by:

23. Keeping national statistical offices systematically informed on data collection and validation processes related to Sustainable Development Goal indicators even when custodian agencies' primary contact is in other institutions.

24. Strengthening national statistical offices' capacity to coordinate the production of Sustainable Development Goal indicators within the national statistical system and apply a coherent quality framework.

25. Supporting national statistical offices to become the national overall coordinator for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

26. Supporting national statistical offices on the dissemination and advocacy of the data and statistical information collected for Sustainable Development Goals.

Annex II

Annual refinements to be made to the global indicator framework

Goals and targets (from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)	*Refinement of indicator*
Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries	
10.7.1 Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination	10.7.1 Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination
10.7.2 Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies	10.7.2 Number of countries with migration policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people
Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	
12.3.1 Global food loss index	12.3.1 (a) Food loss index and (b) food waste index
Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	
14.6.1 Progress by countries in the degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing	14.6.1 Degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
14.b.1 Progress by countries in the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries	14.b.1 Degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	
16.7.1 Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions	16.7.1 Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups

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Work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the report provides a description of the work carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with other entities of the United Nations system, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It contains a description of the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64), on the basis of data pertaining to and analysis of the global Goal indicators, as mandated in paragraph 83 of the 2030 Agenda. Also described is the work undertaken to update the database on the global Goal indicators, including the launch of a new user interface, and to support countries in the implementation of the indicators at the national level. In addition, an update is provided on the progress of work on principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms; the work on a federated system of national and global data hubs; and the work of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training.

The Commission is invited to take note of the work carried out and to comment on the progress of the work and the proposed work programme.

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I. Introduction

1. In its decision 49/102, the Statistical Commission welcomed the work by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat carried out in collaboration and cooperation with the United Nations system to support the systematic follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national, regional and global levels. That work was mandated by the General Assembly in paragraphs 4 and 11 of its resolution 71/313. Specifically, the Commission expressed its appreciation for the preparation of the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017* and the updating of the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. In that context, the Commission requested the Division to make available adequate and complete metadata and compilation guidance on the indicators. It also welcomed the efforts to establish a federated system of national and global data hubs for the Goals and supported the establishment of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, endorsing its terms of reference. Lastly, it welcomed the draft principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms and requested the Division to report to the Commission thereon at its fiftieth session.

II. Sustainable Development Goals progress report for 2018

2. In 2018, two complementary reports were produced by the Division, with input from the United Nations system, on progress towards the Goals, to provide a global snapshot of the progress made and the remaining gaps. They inform and illustrate the situation, three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, with regard to efforts to achieve that ambitious agenda for a better future for all people. The reports are based on data provided by national statistical systems.

3. The report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Goals (E/2018/64) provided important input to the deliberations of Member States at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018. The second report, The *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*, which was launched on 20 June 2018 and aimed at a wider audience, informed the media and the public about the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a user-friendly format.[1]

4. The reports show that people are living better lives than they were a decade ago, even in the regions facing the greatest development obstacles. At the same time, countries are facing mounting challenges on the journey towards the achievement of the Goals, such as a fast-changing climate, an increased number of conflicts, inequality and persistent pockets of poverty and hunger. Also highlighted in the reports is the pressing need for reliable, timely, open and disaggregated data to enable policymakers to take evidence-based decisions. It is stressed that political leadership, adequate resources and commitment to further expand data collection, production and dissemination are required to meet the data needs.

5. The reports are based on the global indicator framework developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, which was adopted by the General Assembly in July 2017 in its resolution 71/313. They are accompanied by a comprehensive statistical annex and the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, containing country and regional data.

[1] Available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018/.

III. Database

6. Accompanying the launch of *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018* was the release of the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database.[2] It contains the data on the global Goal indicators used in the above-mentioned reports and includes both country-level data and regional and global aggregates. It includes data for 144 of the 232 indicators and more than 1 million data records. An accompanying metadata repository[3] contains the metadata for the indicators that have an internationally established methodology and standards. Access to the country-level data and the metadata ensures full transparency as to the data and methodologies used for global reporting.

7. The database and metadata repository are maintained by the Division. The data and metadata are provided by international agencies and entities in accordance with their mandates; they are known as custodian agencies. For each value of the indicator, the custodian agency is also requested to indicate whether the national data were adjusted, estimated, modelled or the result of global monitoring.[4] For example, national data may be adjusted for international comparability or, where data are missing, estimated.

8. For the 2018 release, the user interface of the database was upgraded to allow more interactive and convenient access. An application programming interface is available, providing programmatic access to the database using the OpenAPI Specification.[5] Using a new and improved data processing system, efforts are under way to allow more frequent data updates (from a major annual update to multiple domain-specific annual updates) in order to provide users with access to more timely data.

9. The reports, database and metadata repository are hosted on the Goal indicators website,[6] which is maintained by the Division. The website also contains information on the work and activities of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Goals monitoring and reporting toolkit for United Nations country teams.

IV. Electronic handbook on Goal indicators

10. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States were encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels that were led and driven by countries. As a result, there is a growing need for information targeted to

[2] Available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/.

[3] Available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/.

[4] The nature of the data is determined as follows: (a) Country data: produced and disseminated by the country (including data adjusted by the country to meet international standards); (b) Country data adjusted: produced and provided by the country, but adjusted by the international agency for international comparability to comply with internationally agreed standards, definitions and classifications; (c) Estimated: estimated based on national data, such as surveys or administrative records, or other sources but on the same variable being estimated, produced by the international agency when country data for some year or years are not available, when multiple sources exist or when there are data quality issues; (d) Modelled: modelled by the agency on the basis of other covariates when there is a complete lack of data on the variable being estimated; (e) Global monitoring data: produced on a regular basis by the designated agency for global monitoring, based on country data. There is no corresponding figure at the country level.

[5] Documentation in this regard is available at https://unstats.un.org/SDGAPI/swagger/.

[6] See http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/.

national statisticians on how to collect and calculate information on effort to attain the Goals, as well as monitor them, using data produced by national statistical systems. Realizing this need, the Division, in collaboration with the indicators' custodian agencies, recently launched an electronic handbook on the global Goal indicators.[7]

11. The handbook is intended to be a comprehensive reference source for methodological key aspects, such as concepts, definitions, sources and methods of calculation, that are essential to compiling the indicators. It also provides additional links and references to more detailed information, so that national statisticians can delve into detailed references when needed. Currently, the handbook covers some 120 tier I and tier II indicators and will be updated as required to account for methodological developments and to include additional indicators as their methodology becomes established and they are reclassified as tier II or tier I.

V. Work programme of the inter-agency working group on the global Sustainable Development Goals review

12. More than 50 international agencies and organizations contributed to the Goals progress reports and to the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database and metadata repository with data and analysis. To provide a working mechanism for the United Nations system to prepare the report, as mandated in the 2030 Agenda, the Division has been convening regular teleconferences with the agencies that provide data and analysis for the preparation of the annual progress reports and the regular updating of the database. Since 2017, an annual face-to-face meeting has also been organized to allow for easier exchanges and more in-depth technical discussion.

13. The inter-agency working group:

(a) Reviews and discusses plans for the production of the annual Goals progress report of the Secretary-General and the complementary, user-friendly annual report;

(b) Agrees on the structure, scope and coverage of the yearly reports and related contributions by the relevant organizations;

(c) Contributes to the regular updating of the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, including by providing updates and refinements to the metadata, as needed;

(d) Exchanges information and updates on capacity development activities relating to statistics and indicators for the 2030 Agenda;

(e) Reports annually to the Commission as part of the present report.

VI. Development cooperation and technical assistance activities of the Division on Goal indicators

14. The Division, the regional commissions and the specialized agencies, funds and programmes have continued their close collaboration in the area of statistical capacity development. Currently, a $10 million United Nations Development Account programme, with the participation of all regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Human

[7] Available at https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/SDGeHandbook/Home.

Settlements Programme and the Division, is being implemented to strengthen national statistical systems for the follow-up and review of the Goals, including by addressing specific data gaps. The programme is structured using four pillars: means of implementation, environment statistics and indicators, social and demographic statistics and indicators, and economic statistics and indicators.

15. Implementation began gradually in the fourth quarter of 2016. Most activities for the four pillars began with regional and subregional activities before progressively focusing on country missions, national training workshops, the development of specific guidelines, the collection of good practices and the development of online training courses. Initially, the programme was foreseen to gradually wrap up and conclude with a series of subregional and regional workshops by the end of 2019. A midterm evaluation, conducted by an external evaluator and concluded in November 2017, highlighted that the programme was progressing well and that its implementation was broadly on track, despite a delay in its inception. On the basis of the outcome of and recommendations provided in the evaluation report, it has been decided to extend the programme by a year, until the end of 2020, with additional funding of $1.5 million.

16. The programme also builds the capacity of developing countries in terms of strengthening the legal, institutional and organizational environment in which statistical authorities operate and promotes an integrated and consistent planning of statistical production and development to address increased data needs across multiple statistical domains. To support the development of an e-learning portal, including e-learning and training materials and courses for the production and use of Goal indicators, the programme has included support for the development of relevant guidelines and training materials. In particular, it supports the updating of the *Handbook of Statistical Organization*, the third edition of which was published in 2003, as requested by the Commission in its decision 48/103.

17. The updated handbook is conceived as a living document that will be available electronically. This will allow chapters to be drafted and released independently, in accordance with the priorities identified at the forty-ninth session of the Commission. The overall updating process is based on a country-led approach and supported by a drafting team of consultants, led by the Division and an advisory group comprising 21 countries and organizations. Currently, advance drafts of some chapters are being reviewed. The work on all chapters is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2020.

18. The Division has completed two more United Nations Development Account projects aimed at enhancing the statistical capacity of Member States for Goal monitoring. One project provided assistance to national statistical offices in six pilot countries to measure, monitor, assess and report on progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda and was completed in the first half of 2018. Its main outputs included an assessment of the statistical capacity of the pilot countries to monitor the global indicators and the development of a detailed statistical capacity gap assessment methodology. The other project supported Member States to develop and strengthen environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring of sustainable development and was completed at the end of 2017.

19. In December 2016, the Division formally agreed to conduct a project funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to make the Goal indicators available to the broadest possible audience and to strengthen the capacity of countries in the compilation and use of the indicators. The project covers 20 countries in Africa and Asia, 9 of which participated in a previous project of the Division and the Department on the

Millennium Development Goal indicators. The current project will run until June 2021.

20. The main project activities are to support countries in the development of national strategies for monitoring the Goals, in the creation or upgrading of national data and metadata platforms of Goal indicators and in engagement with users of the Goal data. Deliverables at the global level are a Goal data and visualization platform, providing a global indicators database and comparisons between global and national data sets, and the establishment of automated data exchange based on the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange standard.

21. The Division has completed initial assessment missions in all new project countries. Detailed capacity gap assessments have been carried out in most countries, and the remaining assessments are planned for completion in the first half of 2019. National metadata workshops, to be conducted in the coming months, will provide training on the structure of metadata and the compilation of the Goal indicators. Furthermore, the Division will work with countries on broad user engagement to ensure that the national platforms are used for decision-making and reporting to the largest extent possible. The Division will also seek to respond to pilot countries' requests linked to improving data availability.[8]

22. In 2018, the Division has also piloted data exchange for Goal indicators, again using the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange standard, with two project countries, Cambodia and the United Republic of Tanzania. National Goal indicators from those countries were delivered to the Division's prototype data exchange website, where comparisons could be made between national and global Goal indicators. This work will continue until data and metadata exchange have been established with all project countries.

23. The Division also works closely with other international agencies within the strategic results group on integrated Sustainable Development Goal implementation, part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, through the work of a task team on country-focused data and reporting, co-chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The group was established in May 2018 to facilitate the provision of coherent support by United Nations country teams (resident and non-resident agencies) to national statistical systems for localization, monitoring and reporting on the Goals, including the indicators and targets. As part of these efforts, the Division hosts on its Goal indicators website a toolkit for United Nations country teams on Goal monitoring and reporting.[9]

24. A comprehensive overview of the Division's activities on technical capacity-building, including those relating to the implementation of the Goal indicators, is provided in document E/CN.3/2019/28. In addition, the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, available in document E/CN.3/2019/4, provides information about the work on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and the second United Nations World Data Forum. The report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (E/CN.3/2019/2) provides information about the work to implement the global indicator framework, such as methodological work on the indicators, data flows and efforts by the three working groups, on interlinkages, the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange standard and geospatial information.

[8] More information about the activities under the project is available at https://unstats.un.org/capacity-building/unsd-dfid.

[9] See https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unct-toolkit.

VII. Principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms

25. In January 2018, the Division organized, in cooperation with partners, a conference on national reporting and dissemination platforms. Participants discussed and agreed on principles of Goal indicator reporting and dissemination platforms and guidelines for their application, which were submitted to the Commission at its forty-ninth session for information and review. The principles and guidelines have proved to be extremely useful in steering efforts under the above-mentioned project of the Department for International Development and other international initiatives to support countries in the development and implementation of their national reporting and dissemination platforms and were reviewed and discussed with countries on multiple occasions.

26. On the basis of the experiences in countries and further consultations, the principles and guidelines for their application underwent a final review. The updated principles and guidelines are provided as a background document. They can be used by countries, international agencies and other actors to evaluate and make decisions on platforms being proposed for implementation. For example, as part of the above-mentioned project of the Department for International Development, the Division has used the principles and guidelines to consider platform solutions and has encouraged countries to join long-term initiatives that will provide support for the platform beyond the end of the project to ensure sustainability.

VIII. Launch of a federated information system for the Goals

27. In March 2017, a research exercise on a federated information system for the Goals was initiated by the Division, in partnership with the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI),[10] with the aim of exploring the feasibility of establishing a modern platform for collaboration among producers and users of statistical and geospatial data and information across national and global statistical systems. The exercise was based on a common vision of implementing the 2030 Agenda through effective access to and use of integrated statistical, geospatial and other sources of data, through technologies that facilitate interoperability, data sharing, visualization and dissemination, and collaboration across data producers. The following countries have joined the initiative: Brazil, Colombia, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Philippines, Qatar, Senegal, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania and State of Palestine. Several countries have initiated consultations with the Division regarding participation in the system.

28. The initial pilot exercise delivered a proof of concept of the system that was discussed at a seminar held before the forty-ninth session of the Commission. Subsequently, the Commission, in its decisions 49/101 and 49/102, welcomed the efforts to establish the system to facilitate the integration of different data sources, promote data interoperability and foster collaboration among partners from stakeholder groups, including the geospatial community and other data providers, and to improve data flows and global reporting on the Goals.

29. With the launch of a United Nations data hub featuring layers of geospatially enabled data series from the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database,[11] and its federation with an increasing number of national data hubs, the

[10] An international supplier of geographic information system software, web geographic information system applications and geodatabase management applications.

[11] Available at https://unstats-undesa.opendata.arcgis.com/.

initiative is now entering a full implementation phase, focused on the mobilization of resources and the expansion of the network of partners to broaden its reach and scope.

IX. Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training

30. The Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training has continued to take forward training in official statistics. Its first meeting was held on 8 March 2018, on the margins of the forty-ninth session of the Commission, at which the founding and advisory group members discussed the way forward and expanded the membership to include additional entities. There are currently 21 founding members of the Network, comprising 16 regional and international training institutes and 5 countries whose national statistical offices have statistical training centres that provide training beyond their national borders. In addition to the founding members, the Network includes members of the stakeholder advisory group, which currently encompasses eight national statistical offices. During its first meeting, the current President of the International Statistical Institute was elected as Chair of the Network.

31. The Network focuses on multiple streams of work to address such topics in statistical training as: (a) reviewing the current demand for and supply of training in official statistics by the founding members and conducting an analysis to see where gaps exist and ascertain where additional focus is required; (b) developing examples for training courses; (c) reviewing and auditing the technology used in training in official statistics and statistical systems; and (d) reviewing and assessing statistical literacy training, in particular around the data needs of policymakers. Four task teams were created to advance the activities relevant to each work stream. The activities of the Network are continuing.

32. Information on the current membership and the outputs of the Network is provided as a background document.

X. Points for discussion

33. **The Commission is invited:**

(a) **To take note of the present report;**

(b) **To endorse the principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms;**

(c) **To express its views on the continuation of the implementation of the federated system of national and global Goals data hubs;**

(d) **To express its views on the progress of work of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training.**

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Report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report provides a summary of the activities since the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission. It summarizes work on the preparation of a document on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, including recommendations for the establishment of a financing mechanism, and the launch of the Dubai Declaration, and provides an update on the second United Nations World Data Forum, held from 22 to 24 October 2018 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. It also provides an update on the next steps towards a more efficient coordination of the United Nations statistical system. Discussions will be focused on each topic separately.

Points for decision by the Commission include: (a) approval of the document on the implementation of the Global Action Plan and the Dubai Declaration; (b) review and approval of the recommendations for a more efficient coordination of the United Nations statistical system; and (c) review and approval of the proposed workplan of the High-level Group for 2019.

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Report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

I. Introduction

1. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was established at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission. It is composed of representatives from 22 national statistical offices and operates under the auspices of the Statistical Commission. In its decision 46/101,[1] the Commission tasked the High-level Group with providing strategic leadership for the implementation process related to the Sustainable Development Goals as it concerned statistical monitoring and reporting and fostering statistical capacity-building, partnership and coordination.

II. Meetings of the High-level Group

A. Eleventh meeting, 9 and 10 May 2018, Rabat

2. The 11th meeting of the High-level Group was hosted by the High Commission for Planning of Morocco in Rabat on 9 and 10 May 2018. The main objectives of the meeting were: (a) to discuss proposed financing mechanisms for capacity development, (b) to review preparations of the Dubai outcome document on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and financing for statistics, (c) to review the preparations for the second United Nations World Data Forum, to be held in October 2018 in Dubai and (d) to review the supporting documents for the creation of the position of United Nations chief statistician.

3. At the meeting, the High-level Group agreed upon the programme for the second United Nations World Data Forum and the High-level Group's inputs for sessions. It also discussed and agreed on the need for follow-up to the Global Action Plan and related outcome documents for the Forum. These documents include implementation of the Global Action Plan and financing for data, along with a declaration that would carry forward the vision and strategic objectives of the Global Action Plan (see below). The main outcomes of the meeting included agreement on the preparation of the documents for the forum in Dubai (a declaration and a document on the implementation of the Global Action Plan and financing for data); changing of the name of the subgroup on a more efficient statistical system to the "subgroup on a more efficient statistical system within the United Nations"; agreement that the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS 21) would be included as a standing issue partner in future open segments of meetings of the High-level Group; submission of comments to the Secretariat on the programme and additional sessions of the Forum related to the High-level Group; and discussions on the need to adequately transition new members into the work of the High-level Group after the 2019 rotation.

4. A side event was held on 8 May 2018 with representatives from the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and its Board, and the World Bank, which covered better collaboration among the various actors working to support the national

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2015, Supplement No. 4* (E/2015/24), chap. I, sect. C.

statistical systems and explored in depth financing and funding mechanisms and frameworks to support national statistical systems. It was agreed that improving collaboration among partners of the High-level Group and other partners, including the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, the World Bank and the Global Partnership, would facilitate capacity-building for statistics at the global level, even beyond 2030.

B. Twelfth meeting, 21 and 25 October 2018, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

5. The 12th meeting of the High-level Group was held over two days, 21 and 25 October 2018 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The main objectives of the 12th meeting were: (a) to review and make a decision about the proposals for the host country of the third United Nations World Data Forum; (b) to discuss and agree upon the Dubai Declaration; (c) to review and discuss work on financing for data and statistics; (d) to review and discuss the proposal for a more efficient United Nations statistical system; and (e) to take initial stock of the experiences of the second Forum.

6. The High-level Group reviewed the bids and took a decision on the host for the third Forum and took initial stock of the outcome of the second Forum (see below). The role of the host country in the programmatic aspects of the Forum was also discussed extensively. It was stressed that determining how to allow the host country to be highlighted within the scope of the Forum, while ensuring that the event remained clearly a United Nations event and did not become a national showcase, could be a challenge. Furthermore, it was agreed that the host country would remain an ex officio member of the committee without a role in the development of the content and programmatic aspects of the event.

7. The main outcomes under each agenda item of the meeting are covered below under the substantive sections of the paper.

III. United Nations World Data Forum

A. Background

8. Following one of the main recommendations contained in the report entitled "A world that counts", presented in November 2014 by the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, the Statistical Commission agreed that a United Nations world data forum on sustainable development data would be the suitable platform for intensifying cooperation with various professional groups, such as information technology professionals, geospatial information managers, data scientists and users, as well as civil society stakeholders.

9. The decision on which country will host the event is made through an open call for expressions of interest to host the Forum, sent from the Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York. The expressions of interest are followed up by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat; interested countries are invited to submit a more detailed bid to host the Forum. The High-level Group reviews the offers, invites selected countries to present their bids and takes a decision.

10. The first United Nations World Data Forum was held in January 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa. The second Forum was held in October 2018 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

11. At the 12th meeting of the High-level Group, on 21 October 2018, the High-level Group agreed that the next Forum would be hosted in Switzerland in 2020 (see below for additional information).

B. Second Forum

12. The second United Nations World Data Forum was hosted by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority of the United Arab Emirates from 22 to 24 October 2018, with support from the Statistics Division, under the guidance of the Statistical Commission and the High-level Group.

13. Across the more than 85 sessions encompassing the six thematic areas of the Forum, progress in addressing some of the key challenges related to sustainable development were showcased, new initiatives were launched and some new work streams were identified. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed spoke at the opening of the Forum.

14. Over 2,000 participants from more than 100 countries attended the Forum. Different data communities were well represented, including civil society organizations, research institutions, private sector entities, geospatial entities and national statistical systems. Attendance at the second Forum was larger and more diverse than at the first forum, showing the increased level of collaboration across different data communities. Overall, there was a general sentiment of a new community of data experts and statisticians coming together with common goals under the brand of the United Nations World Data Forum.

15. The programme of the Forum was developed by a programme committee composed of representatives from various data communities. Through an open call for proposals, an exceptional collection of proposals were submitted by a large variety of stakeholders. In total, over 480 proposals were received. The programme committee, with assistance from the Secretariat, conducted multiple rounds of review of the proposals. Attempts were made to merge similar proposals, or to incorporate additional elements into existing proposals in order to strengthen the final programme and allow as many contributions as possible. The High-level Group, as the guiding body, reviewed the final suggestions presented by the programme committee and made final decisions on the programmatic context. The High-level Group also developed some sessions to highlight important topics, such as its work on efficient coordination of the United Nations statistical system and on financing for data and statistics.

16. One important topic discussed by the programme committee was the assessment of the impact of the Forum. In that context, the programme committee organized a session to reflect on the evolution of the Forum over time and to assess its impact. It was recommended that follow-up and assessment of the impact of the Forum continue to be highlighted at future events.

17. Suggestions by members of the programme committee and members of the High-level Group on the second United Nations World Data Forum included the following: include more variety in the format of the sessions; organize real debates on key topics; incorporate a dedicated space to highlight new initiatives and work by organizations; allow for quick presentations on proposals that were not accepted in the official programme; provide additional oversight on how multiple proposals are combined; engage with and promote youth participation through dedicated initiatives; continue efforts to bring more policymakers to future forums; and secure a venue that is more compact so that delegates do not have to move between multiple buildings.

18. The Forum concluded with the Dubai Declaration (see below), which reaffirms the Global Action Plan as the common framework for the global data and statistical community to carry out the work to improve data for sustainable development and calls for the establishment of an innovative funding facility for data that is entirely demand-driven, under the guidance of representatives of statistical systems and different data and donor communities.

C. Third Forum

19. In January 2018, a call for expressions of interest to host the third United Nations World Data Forum was sent by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York. Member States were invited to submit their expressions of interest by 31 March 2018. Six expressions of interest were received. Initial replies were followed up with a request for full proposals to be submitted to the Secretariat by 31 August 2018. Three full bids were submitted by the deadline. After an initial review, two bidding countries were invited to present their proposals to the High-level Group in Dubai.

20. At its 12th meeting, on 21 October 2018, after presentations by the bidding countries and careful consideration of all aspects and discussions, the High-level Group decided that the third United Nations World Data Forum would be held in Bern from 18 to 21 October 2020. The opening ceremony is planned for Sunday, 18 October, followed by three full days of the event.

21. The Statistics Division, as the secretariat of the High-level Group and the programme committee, will coordinate with the host country's statistical office, the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland, to ensure the success of the Forum. A programme committee will be formed in early 2019. It will discuss and review the six original thematic areas, which will again be used as the guide for developing the programmatic content.

IV. Implementation the Cape Town Global Action Plan

A. Notes on the implementation of the Global Action Plan

22. Over the past year, the joint subgroup of the High-level Group and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, along with the Secretariat, have collected examples of the implementation of the Global Action Plan. The collection of country-level examples is essential to an understanding of how the Global Action Plan is being implemented and how to link it to the work on financing. Through an online consultation,[2] examples can still be added for consideration and inclusion in the online collection.

B. Better data for sustainable development: implementing the Global Action Plan

23. The joint subgroup of the High-level Group and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, led by Denmark, developed a paper entitled "Better data for sustainable development: implementing the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Data for the 2030 Agenda", which is being transmitted to the Commission as a background document.

[2] The online consultation is available through 15 February 2019 from http://bit.ly/CTGAP-Implementation.

24. The paper focuses on the financing aspects of statistical capacity-building and the development of a financing mechanism, and sets out guiding principles for the implementation of the Global Action Plan. The success of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, data needs for which have created short-, medium- and long-term challenges, must be addressed in a timely and efficient manner. To meet these challenges, the paper calls for the establishment of a transparent financing mechanism open to all stakeholders, including public and private ones, which allows for financing in terms of both monetary inputs and the provision of in-kind transfers, and allows for openness in combining funding. Another important role of the mechanism is to ensure and maximize the effectiveness of financing for capacity-building.

25. The paper calls for the funding mechanism to be created under the mandate of the Statistical Commission as its ultimate stakeholder and for strong and efficient governance and an oversight structure. The High-level Group is the main body of the Statistical Commission to oversee the implementation of the mechanism. Furthermore, in order to strengthen political support for the implementation of the Global Action Plan, it is suggested that the oversight mechanism reach beyond the Statistical Commission and draw from the Statistical Commission (and the High-level Group) and key donors, data communities and implementing agencies, who will guide decisions on the operational modalities and ways of raising resources. The Statistical Commission will oversee the implementation of the Global Action Plan through its annual reviews. Furthermore, it is recommended that implementation of the Global Action Plan also be considered by the high-level political forum on sustainable development as part of overall deliberations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

26. The secretariat function for the mechanism would be housed at an international organization with full membership, such as the World Bank, and would be a semi-autonomous unit that would take advantage of the institutional set-up, as well as experiences dealing with large financial funding mechanisms, leverage the institution's operational capability and provide unique access to ministers of finance.

27. The global financing mechanism would be an umbrella structure to coordinate and consolidate existing and future inputs for the implementation of the Global Action Plan, and provide a system to promote coherence among the different approaches and projects being undertaken in the national settings. The implementation of the Global Action Plan will be country-led and country-driven, with national priorities at the centre of implementation.

28. The High-level Group carried out various review processes incorporating comments from various key stakeholders via an online consultation through the High-level Group's website. One of the important steps envisaged by the High-level Group was a dialogue bringing together the donor community with the High-level Group and recipient countries to discuss ways to shift the paradigm towards establishing a stronger voice for data and statistics for the donor community and to provide a platform to discuss the High-level Group's paper and recommendations. A meeting called by Switzerland will take place in January 2019 in Bern. This meeting will bring together representatives from donors and foundations with members of the High-level Group, as well as other relevant stakeholders. It was suggested at the October 2018 meeting of the High-level Group that a synthesis document was needed to inform the Bern meeting. That document would include the Declaration and the High-level Group's paper. The High-level Group would provide inputs on its work. It was suggested that the Bern meeting be directed at the principals level and include funding and aid agencies, together with High-level Group representation.

V. Dubai Declaration

29. The High-level Group agreed at its May 2018 meeting in Rabat that it was important to have an outcome document that could attract political attention at every forum and that there would be a Dubai Declaration at the second United Nations World Data Forum.

30. The Dubai Declaration (see annex I) was prepared by a subgroup led by South Africa, with inputs from Denmark, Switzerland and the State of Palestine and assistance by the Secretariat. (For information on membership, see annex III). The Declaration has two essential elements: implementation and financing of the Global Action Plan. The High-level Group discussed and agreed that the Dubai Declaration would need to be agreed upon by the Statistical Commission, especially since some of the operational paragraphs granted the Commission such a prominent role. Furthermore, it was agreed that it would be useful to gain higher levels of support for the Declaration beyond the Statistical Commission.

31. During the second United Nations World Data Forum, the Declaration was posted on the website of the Forum for comments from the participants. (Comments were received from 18 entities.) The revised declaration incorporating comments was announced during the closing plenary of the Forum on 24 October 2018.

32. It was agreed that the Declaration was the official outcome document of the Forum.

VI. Joint subgroup of the High-level Group and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group

33. At its forty-seventh session, the Commission established the joint subgroup and, at the forty-ninth session, endorsed its workplan. The joint subgroup held a meeting on the margins of the forty-ninth session of the Commission to discuss immediate priorities, including the organization of a joint survey with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, and the work on financing.

34. Over the past year, the joint subgroup has been key in the development of the background document entitled "Better data for sustainable development: implementing the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Data for the 2030 Agenda", as described above.

VII. Subgroup on a more efficient statistical system within the United Nations

35. At its forty-ninth session, the Commission recognized the need for stronger coordination and a more efficient United Nations statistical system. It requested the High-level Group to report back to the Commission at its fiftieth session with a proposal that further clarified the role, seniority and functions of the proposed position of chief statistician, among other options, taking into account what was likely to improve global statistical performance in a wider context of ongoing reform processes in the United Nations. The paper prepared by the subgroup, led by Switzerland and Mongolia, covers issues that require stronger coordination within the United Nations statistical system, including different approaches and recommendations on how to achieve stronger coordination and establish a stronger voice for official statistics.

36. The recommendations of the subgroup are: (a) to strengthen the existing mechanism through a series of 7 steps (outlined in the background paper) and (b) within the context of United Nations reform, to raise awareness of the role of statistics at high political levels.

37. The paper entitled "Modernization of the United Nations statistical system: a more effective and efficient United Nations statistical system in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond" is being transmitted to the Commission as a background document.

VIII. Workplan for 2019

38. The High-level Group agreed on a work plan for 2019 focusing on (a) continued implementation of the Global Action Plan and financing for data and statistics, including the next steps in the development of the financing mechanism; (b) further developments in the work on a more efficient United Nations statistical system; and (c) the third United Nations World Data Forum. The details of the workplan are contained in annex II below.

IX. Points for decision

39. The Statistical Commission is invited to:

(a) Approve the Dubai Declaration and recommend the next steps for its consideration at a higher political level;

(b) Review and approve the recommendations for a more efficient coordination of the United Nations statistical system;

(c) Review and approve the proposed workplan of the High-level Group for 2019.

Annex I*

Dubai Declaration: Supporting the Implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data

1. We, the participants gathered here in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, for the 2018 United Nations World Data Forum, from national statistical offices and other parts of the national statistical systems, other data communities, government institutions, private sector, civil society, academia, and media.

2. *Stressing* that the full ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 agenda) cannot be realized without quality, timely, relevant, open and disaggregated data to ensure that no one is left behind.

3. *Recognizing* that the 2030 agenda requires that national statistical systems transform and develop to be agile and responsive to meet the increased demands of data users, including for the full implementation of the 2030 agenda.

4. *Recognising* that the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (CTGAP), launched at the first United Nations World Data Forum held in Cape Town, South Africa in January 2017 and adopted by the UN Statistical Commission, and welcomed by member states in the General Assembly resolution 71/313,[1] guides the implementation of programmes and activities to respond to the data needs of the 2030 Agenda.

5. *Stressing* the need to support fundamental data collection programmes, such as the 2020 population and housing census round.

6. *Stressing* the importance of coordination across the statistical system, including better use and integration of administrative data sources.

7. *Acknowledging* that the data demands for the 2030 Agenda require urgent new, standards-based and interoperable solutions that leverage the power of new data sources and technologies through partnerships between national statistical authorities and the private sector, civil society, and the academia and other research institutions.

8. *Acknowledging* that the 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for enhanced support for strengthening data collection and capacity-building in Member States and the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely, relevant and disaggregated data.

9. Further *acknowledging* that in the 2030 agenda Member States committed to "promote transparent and accountable scaling-up of appropriate public-private cooperation to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including earth observation and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress".[2]

10. Stressing that many national statistical systems still face serious challenges and as a result, accurate and timely data about people's lives are lacking and many people remain "invisible".

11. Recognizing that ensuring and maximizing the effectiveness of financing for new and innovative forms of capacity development is essential for the success of implementation of the CTGAP, and that innovative funding strategies and

* The present annex is being issued without formal editing.

[1] General Assembly resolution 71/313, *Work of the UN Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/71/313 (10 July 2017), available from undocs.org/A/RES/71/313.

[2] General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/67/97 (21 October 2015), available from undocs.org/A/RES/70/1.

coordinated country-led actions that focus on national priorities are needed to bridge the existing funding gap.

12. *Recognizing* that trust among producers and users of data and statistics is key for the effective functioning of the national, regional, and global statistical systems in full adherence with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

We resolve to:

13. Ensure that quality, relevant, timely, open and disaggregated data "by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts"[3] are made available and accessible to all users.

14. Work in a collaborative manner to bring all data communities together to implement the CTGAP, our common framework for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems, and the design and implementation of country-led statistical capacity building activities necessary to achieve the 2030 agenda.

15. Undertake key actions under the six strategic areas of the CTGAP and establish partnerships to leverage the power of new data sources and technologies to provide data to inform decision-making and investment, while ensuring the central role of national statistical offices as they work under a mature framework of principles and practices to assure that statistical data products meet the highest standards.

We are determined to:

16. Mobilise financing at domestic and international levels and ensure political commitment within each country for adequate allocation of domestic resources to strengthen data systems to address existing gaps in the technical and institutional capacities of national data and statistical systems to improve the coverage, frequency, and availability of quality data. Increased availability of sustainable development data, with the vital support of governments and in closer working partnerships with stakeholders from academia, civil society, the private sector, and the public at large, will enable stronger evidence-based decision making.

We call for:

17. The establishment of an innovative funding mechanism, open to all stakeholders under UN membership oversight, that is able to respond in a fast and efficient manner to the priorities of national data and statistical systems, with a goal to mobilize both domestic and international funds and activate partnerships and funding opportunities to strengthen the capacity of national data and statistical systems. The funding mechanism, entirely demand-driven, will be created under the mandate of the UN Statistical Commission and operate under the guidance of representatives of national statistical systems and different data and donor communities who will support the decision making on the operational modalities and on raising resources to address the data needs for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and will be serviced by a Secretariat located at an international institution with global membership.

Dubai, 24 October 2018

[3] Ibid., para. 74 (g).

Annex II

Proposed workplan for 2019 of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda

As the main body providing strategic oversight of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the Statistical Commission, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda in 2019 continues to focus its work on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, the development of the financing mechanism, the next steps for a more efficient United Nations statistical system and the preparatory work for the third United Nations World Data Forum.

Examples and practices in the implementation of the Global Action Plan are essential to understand how national statistical offices and the wider statistical system are working to fulfil the data needs of the 2030 Agenda. Thus, the High-level Group will finalize the implementation notes in 2019. Together with the Statistics Division and other key stakeholders, the High-level Group will elaborate on the financing mechanism and related work. In the area of a more efficient United Nations statistical system, the High-level Group will carry out the work as agreed upon at the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission. For the preparatory work on the third United Nations World Data Forum, the Secretariat will lead the work with the programme committee and the High-level Group.

Throughout the year, the High-level Group will contribute to other high-level events, including side events held during the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission and at the high-level political forum segments and/or meetings of the General Assembly.

The High-level Group will conduct its work through electronic means, with a few face-to-face meetings planned in the second and fourth quarters of 2019. In the second quarter, there will be a rotation of membership, coordinated with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, carried out through the regional commissions.

Proposed workplan

I. Implementation of the Global Action Plan and financing for data and statistics

- A. Implementation of the Global Action Plan

  Notes on implementation: finalization of the online tool

- B. Financing for data and statistics

  1. Establishment of the governance and oversight structure

  2. Liaising with other key stakeholders on capacity development activities

II. A more efficient United Nations statistical system

Implementation of next steps as agreed by the Commission

III. Third United Nations World Data Forum

Preparatory work led by the Secretariat with the programme committee and the High-level Group

IV. Contributions of the High-level Group

A. March 2019: side events at the Statistical Commission

B. July 2019: High-level political forum on sustainable development

C. September 2019: General Assembly and high-level political forum on sustainable development

V. Meetings

A. Thirteenth meeting, 3 March 2019 (prior to the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission)

1. Implementation of the Global Action Plan and work on financing

2. A more efficient United Nations statistical system

3. Membership rotation and transition planning

4. High-level political forum on sustainable development 2019 segments: July (under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council) and September (under the auspices of the General Assembly)

B. Fourteenth meeting, second quarter of 2019, Mongolia (to be confirmed)

C. Fifteenth meeting, fourth quarter of 2019, location to be decided

*1. Membership

A. Rotation: late in the second quarter of 2019 (new members start 1 June 2019)

B. Development of a plan for transition of members into the work streams of the High-level Group

Annex III

Membership of the subgroups of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. Joint subgroup of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators: Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, United Republic of Tanzania and State of Palestine

2. Subgroup on a more efficient statistical system within the United Nations: Angola, Argentina, Italy, Mongolia, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland and State of Palestine

3. Subgroup working on the outcome documents for the second United Nations World Data Forum: Argentina, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Hungary, Morocco, Myanmar, South Africa, Switzerland and State of Palestine

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Items for discussion and decision: Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and open data

Report of the Friends of the Chair group on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on open data

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on open data. The group describes its work on the global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the Principles, a background document supplementing the guidelines for the implementation of the Principles and a background document on work in relation to open data.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

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Report of the Friends of the Chair group on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and on open data

I. Introduction and background

1. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics[1] were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/261 on 29 January 2014. The Assembly endorsed the Principles on the twentieth anniversary of their adoption by the Statistical Commission. From 2011 to 2015, a Friends of the Chair group worked on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Principles in the context of the twentieth anniversary of their adoption.

2. In 2017, the Commission, in its decision 48/107, re-established the Friends of the Chair group to work on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles in the context of the preparation for the twenty-fifth anniversary of their adoption, to be celebrated in 2019.

3. In addition, in 2018, the Commission, in its decision 49/105, created a subgroup on open data under the Friends of the Chair group to work on principles, guidance and support for the implementation of open data in countries.

4. By integrating open data into its current work on the Fundamental Principles, the global statistical community very purposefully allowed for the opportunity to broadly rethink how to implement the Principles in the light of new data needs, including for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Work programme

5. The Friends of the Chair group, constituted in February 2018, consists of 11 country representatives and eight international agencies and international organizations as observers (see annex I to the present report). New Zealand is the Chair of the group, with assistance from Australia.

6. The terms of reference of the group were developed in April 2018 and approved by the Bureau of the Commission (see annex II to the present report). Concerning the organization of its work, the group held a physical meeting on the sidelines of the forty-ninth session of the Commission, in March 2018, and then held regular teleconferences every six weeks (on 16 May, 27 June, 8 August, 19 September, 31 October and 12 December 2018; an upcoming meeting is scheduled for 23 January 2019) to review progress.

7. The primary objectives of the group include work on both the Fundamental Principles and on open data, carrying out activities using the Principles as the overarching context for both.

8. To facilitate the organization of activities, two work streams were developed. The first was focused solely on the Fundamental Principles and comprised the following activities:

(a) A global survey based on a self-assessment of the implementation of the Principles, which also includes specific topics relating to open data practices;

(b) The development of a background document to supplement the existing implementation guidelines for the Principles to support their use, including case

[1] See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/FP-New-E.pdf.

studies, and which is also aimed at providing criteria to evaluate perceived non-compliance with the Principles;

(c) The analysis of other matters relating to the Principles as they arise in other contexts, including their application in the use of non-official and non-traditional data.

9. The second work stream was focused on open data in the context of the Fundamental Principles and comprised the following activities:

(a) Mapping open data principles to the Fundamental Principles;

(b) The development of a background document to synthesize existing open data work covering data interoperability, the implementation of open data practices and the anonymization of data for official statistics;

(c) The analysis of other matters relating to the implementation of open data in official statistics, including legal frameworks, technical aspects and the capacities needed, also included in the background document.

III. Summary of work stream outputs

A. Work stream on the Fundamental Principles

Global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles

10. The questionnaire was based on earlier versions sent to countries by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in 2003 and 2012, respectively,[2] to assess the implementation of the Fundamental Principles. The new, updated version was prepared with the contribution of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), and with the aim of modernizing and improving previous versions, while still maintaining the core questions similar to those in the 2012 edition of the questionnaire to allow for a review of progress.

11. Notable differences include revised and expanded options for each answer based on the implementation guide for the Principles and the results of previous questionnaires, as well as the revision of the wording of questions to improve the consistency of answers, since in 2012 some contradictions between questions were highlighted. The questionnaire also includes new questions relating to open data and non-official and non-traditional data to better appreciate the current situation of national statistical offices and their use of information from an expanded data ecosystem.

12. Over 80 countries had completed the questionnaire at the time of writing, with more expected to do so in the coming weeks. A full analysis of the results is provided in a background document for review by the Commission.

13. It is anticipated that the global survey will be launched for every five-year anniversary of the Fundamental Principles. Therefore, the next survey will be conducted in advance of the thirtieth anniversary of the Principles, to be celebrated in 2024.

[2] See E/CN.3/2004/21 and E/CN.3/2013/3. See also the background document with further information on the 2012 questionnaire results that accompanies document E/CN.3/2013/3, available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/BG-FP.pdf.

Background document supplementing existing implementation guidelines, including the application of the Fundamental Principles for non-official and non-traditional data

14. The first section of the background document will supplement the *United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics: Implementation Guidelines*[3] to support the guidelines' use and additionally provides criteria to evaluate perceived non-compliance. The first section will also utilize information from the global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles and country experiences of implementation challenges, successes and best practices of the Principles. In the second section, the Principles will be mapped against non-official and non-traditional data sources, aiming to highlight their applicability to new data sources, which are becoming more widely used in countries and are beginning to be integrated into official statistical systems.

B. Work stream on open data: background document on the implementation of open data

15. The background document on the implementation of open data provides a synthesis of existing open data work covering data interoperability, the implementation of open data practices and the anonymization of data for official statistics. It also includes an analysis of other matters relating to the implementation of open data in official statistics, including legal frameworks, technical aspects and required capabilities. In an annex to the background document, the Fundamental Principles will be mapped to the Open Data Charter[4] to show interrelationships and where the Principles may be integrated. The Charter is currently undergoing a global review to assess whether its principles need updating to include further advances in processes and principles relating to open data. The Friends of the Chair group will adjust the mapping if there are significant changes.

IV. Recent global activities highlighting the Fundamental Principles and open data

16. The International Open Data Conference 2018,[5] held in Buenos Aires on 27 and 28 September 2018, brought together the global open data community to define strategies to advance open data both locally and globally. A one-day pre-event was organized by Open Data Watch in collaboration with the Division on the theme "National reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals: addressing interoperability and open data", which brought together national statistical offices and relevant stakeholders to discuss how to ensure that national reporting platforms for the Goals integrated the principles of open data and interoperability. The pre-event also provided a dedicated space for representatives of national statistical offices to share their experiences, including the challenges that they were facing, and to get to know the relevant stakeholder groups that are positioned to support them.[6] The event was a unique opportunity for statisticians to engage with open data practitioners from other data communities.

[3] See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/Implementation_Guidelines_FINAL_without_edit.pdf.

[4] See https://opendatacharter.net/principles/.

[5] See www.opendatacon.org/.

[6] A document highlighting outcomes of the pre-event is available at https://opendatawatch.com/publications/iodc18-pre-event-outcome-report/.

17. During the second United Nations World Data Forum,[7] held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 22 to 24 October 2018, the first version of a guide entitled "Data interoperability: a practitioner's guide to joining up data in the development sector"[8] was launched by the collaborative on Sustainable Development Goal data interoperability.[9] The guide was developed as a practical tool to help to improve the integration and reusability of data and data systems. New sections, examples and guidance will be added over time to ensure its continued relevance and usefulness in this fast-evolving area. The guide is considered a living document and was welcomed by the Friends of the Chair group as a resource for countries and included as a background document to the present report as input for the Commission's discussions.

V. Way forward

18. At its first meeting, the group discussed its mandate and the timeline for the activities outlined by the Commission in its decisions, noting that the work on the Fundamental Principles had a well-established line of work throughout the years, while open data were a new area possibly requiring further work moving forward. Therefore, when reviewing the work that it was mandated to undertake, the group decided that the work on the Principles had concluded for that round of review, but that periodic five-year reviews of the global implementation of the Principles, aligned with the five-year anniversaries of their adoption, should continue in order to chart progress and allow focus on aspects of implementation where needed, as well as to share best practices. Therefore, it is recommended that the Friends of the Chair group be resumed in time for the next review, in advance of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Principles, to be celebrated in 2024. In the meantime, any pressing issues, such as perceived non-compliance, should be considered by the Commission as necessary. In order for the open data work to continue, it is recommended that a working group on open data be created, which would allow for the collaboration between the international open data and statistical communities to be continued and also support efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. If established, the group would develop terms of reference for the work going forward, based on the decisions of the Commission.

19. Some members of the Friends of the Chair group have expressed interest in participating in the proposed working group on open data; New Zealand has offered to continue as Chair. Additional members are invited to express interest in joining.

VI. Points for discussion

20. **The Statistical Commission is invited:**

(a) **To express its views on the document containing the results of the global survey on self-assessment by countries on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles and on open data;**

(b) **To express its views on the document on data interoperability and open data entitled "Data interoperability: a practitioner's guide to joining up data in the development sector";**

[7] See https://undataforum.org/.

[8] See https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/InteropGuide/Home.

[9] The collaborative was established in March 2017 at a side event of the forty-eighth session of the Commission and convened by the Division and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data.

(c) To review and approve the document supplementing the guidelines for the implementation of the Fundamental Principles;

(d) To review and approve the document on the implementation of open data;

(e) To review and approve the proposal to consider the work of the Friends of the Chair group concluded for the present round, but to be resumed in time for the next appraisal, in 2024, and for a working group to be established in order to continue the work on open data, which would present its work at the fifty-first session of the Commission and every two years thereafter.

Annex I

Membership of the Friends of the Chair group

Chair

New Zealand

Members

Argentina
Australia
Egypt
Italy
Jordan
Malaysia
Mauritius
Poland
Suriname
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Observers

Collaborative on Sustainable Development Goal data interoperability
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
International Statistical Institute
Open Data Watch
Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21)
United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management secretariat
World Bank

Annex II

Terms of reference of the Friends of the Chair group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

I. Background

1. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/261 on 29 January 2014, on the twentieth anniversary of their adoption by the Statistical Commission.

2. From 2011 to 2015, a Friends of the Chair group worked on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles in connection with the twentieth anniversary of their adoption. At the forty-eighth session of the Commission, a Friends of the Chair group was created by the Commission in its decision 48/107 to work on selected dimensions of the implementation of the Principles in the context of the preparations for the twenty-fifth anniversary of their adoption, to be celebrated in 2019.

3. In addition, at the forty-ninth session of the Commission, a subgroup under the Friends of the Chair group was created by the Commission in its decision 49/105 to work on principles, guidance and support for the implementation of open data in countries.

II. Objectives and tasks

4. The primary objectives of the Friends of the Chair group include work on both the Fundamental Principles and on open data.

5. In decision 48/107, the following work programme was agreed to, contained in paragraph 4 of E/CN.3/2017/9:

(a) To develop and agree on suitable tools and methods for assessing the implementation of the Fundamental Principles;

(b) To conduct a global assessment before the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission, in 2019, which will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles by the Commission;

(c) To review and, if necessary, update the current implementation guidelines;

(d) To re-evaluate the mechanisms focused on how to best address perceived non-compliance with the Fundamental Principles;

(e) To examine any matters relating to the Fundamental Principles as they may arise in other contexts, such as quality assurance or in the use of non-official and non-traditional data.

6. In addition, in its decision 48/107 the Commission:

(a) Cautioned against changing the Fundamental Principles at that point and encouraged the group to focus its reflection on their implementation and to examine a potentially widened scope of the Principles with respect to non-official and non-traditional data;

(b) Requested the group to take into account current discussions on open data, big data and quality assurance;

(c) Requested the group to propose ways to give the Fundamental Principles higher visibility, in particular beyond the community of official statistics.

7. In its decision 49/105, the Commission requested the subgroup on open data to deliver on the proposed tasks of reviewing principles and legal frameworks for open data, clarifying technical aspects and skills needed and providing guidance on implementation, including anonymization of data, as detailed in paragraph 21 of document E/CN.3/2018/6. The Commission also requested the subgroup to map open data principles to the Fundamental Principles and address the need for data interoperability principles and tools.

III. Membership

8. The Friends of the Chair group will consist of country representatives and international agencies and international organizations as observers. The Chair will be assumed by New Zealand, with assistance from Australia. The Group will comprise country representatives from Argentina, Egypt, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Poland, Suriname and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The International Statistical Institute is an observer. Additional country representatives may join the group, as may international organizations as observers, in particular those that expressed interest in doing so during the forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions of the Commission or that have expressed interest to the Chair.

9. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat will serve as the secretariat of the group.

IV. Organization of work

10. The group will work through electronic exchanges and periodic meetings whenever possible. Where feasible, the meetings will be conducted in conjunction with other meetings being held throughout the year.

V. Expected duration

11. The group will report to the Commission at its fiftieth session on the work of the group regarding the Fundamental Principles and the work on open data with a set of recommendations on whether its work is complete or needs to continue, especially given that the open data mandate is new.

VI. Proposed activities

12. In line with the mandate and further guidance given by the Commission, the group will carry out its activities using the Fundamental Principles as the overarching context for both work streams. To facilitate the organization of the activities, two work streams are proposed, with the first focused solely on the Principles, namely:

(a) A global survey based on a self-assessment of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles questionnaire, followed by peer-review case studies on their implementation;

(b) The development of a background document that supplements the existing implementation guidelines of the Fundamental Principles to support their use, including case studies, which would also aim to provide criteria to evaluate perceived non-compliance with the Principles;

(c) Analysis of other matters relating to the Fundamental Principles as they arise in other contexts, including their application in the use of non-official and non-traditional data.

13. The second work stream will focus on open data in the context of the Fundamental Principles, namely:

(a) Mapping open data principles to the Fundamental Principles and other relevant principles used in other groups such as the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics;

(b) The development of a background document that synthesizes existing open data work covering data interoperability, the implementation of open data practices and the anonymization of data for official statistics;

(c) Analysis of other matters relating to the implementation of open data in official statistics, including legal frameworks, technical aspects and the capabilities needed.

United Nations E/CN.3/2019/6

Economic and Social Council

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Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 3 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: national quality assurance frameworks

Report of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks. The report provides an outline of the contents of the draft of the United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics, which contains recommendations on quality assurance, an updated national quality assurance framework, practical guidance for its implementation and reference materials concerning quality assurance in the global statistical system. The draft manual will be available as a background document. In addition, the report presents the results of a survey on the implementation of national quality assurance framework by countries (the results of which will be provided in a background document), a proposal to support countries in their implementation of a national quality assurance framework for the period 2019–2023 and the proposed programme of work of the Expert Group for the next two years. Points for decision by the Statistical Commission include: (a) the review and adoption of the new manual; (b) the review and approval of the proposed programme of work and the updated terms of reference of the Expert Group; and (c) the review and approval of the proposed plan to support countries in their implementation of a national quality assurance framework.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

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Report of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks

I. Introduction

1. By its decision 48/106, the Statistical Commission re-established the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks, welcomed and endorsed the proposed programme of work of the Expert Group for the next two years and approved its updated terms of reference, including its main deliverable of updating the template and guidelines for a generic national quality assurance framework and amending the overall information package as required. In this context, the Commission stressed the importance of high-quality and disaggregated data for the full implementation of and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional and global levels, and recognized that the Expert Group was a good vehicle to ensure data quality for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission requested the Expert Group to take into account the work on data quality already undertaken at the national, regional and global levels to avoid duplicating existing efforts and with a view to harmonizing existing frameworks, and to consider the relationship with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It also emphasized the importance of ensuring the quality of data derived from new sources and new data providers, including those outside the official statistical system, and requested the Expert Group to address issues involved in the implementation of a national quality assurance framework, including issues of coordination, and the need to support countries in its implementation.

II. Work of the Expert Group since 2017, including the drafting of the United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics

2. The following 17 countries joined the re-established Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks: Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, Ukraine and Viet Nam. The following 8 international and regional organizations also joined the re-established Expert Group: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

3. At its first meeting, in July 2017, the Expert Group elected Canada and the Philippines as Co-Chairs and discussed an initial draft programme of work and a tentative timetable for its work. The members also agreed on the working methods of the Expert Group, including the use of a United Nations statistics wiki platform to facilitate and enable the work of the Expert Group. Between July 2017 and October 2018, the Expert Group conducted nine virtual meetings. In addition, the Expert Group held two rounds of formal consultations among its experts and a face-to-face meeting in New York from 29 October to 1 November 2018 to discuss and finalize the draft of the United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics, which will replace the template and guidelines for a generic national quality assurance framework that were adopted by the Statistical Commission in 2012.

4. On 27 November 2018, the draft of the manual was sent to all Member States for consultation with the request to provide comments and suggestions by 10 January 2019. On the basis of the results of the consultation and an additional detailed editorial and substantial review, the Expert Group is finalizing the draft manual, which is being provided to the Statistical Commission as a background document.

5. Aside from and prior to its work on the manual, the Expert Group had conducted a survey to assess the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks in countries and had developed an initial proposal for a plan to support countries in the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks for the period 2019–2023.

III. Contents and objectives of the manual

6. The manual contains recommendations on quality assurance, the updated United Nations national quality assurance framework for official statistics, along with practical guidance for its implementation, and reference material concerning quality assurance in the global statistical system. Specifically, chapter 1 provides information on the objective, structure, users and uses of the manual, along with an introduction to quality management and a glossary of important terms used in the manual. Chapter 2 presents recommendations for quality assurance, which are based on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, thereby identifying and clearly spelling out the responsibilities of national statistical system member entities in order to ensure the quality of data and statistics. Chapter 3 contains the updated United Nations framework, with 19 quality principles and their associated requirements. The annex to the manual complements chapter 3 by providing, for each requirement, elements to be ensured that reflect good practice. Chapters 4 to 8 give guidance on the implementation of the United Nations framework (or any other quality assurance framework). Chapter 4 provides an overview of quality assessment tools. Chapters 5 and 6 provide information on institutional arrangements and actions for implementation. Chapter 7 contains special considerations for ensuring quality, depending on the data sources that are being used. Chapter 8 addresses quality assurance for Sustainable Development Goal indicator data and statistics. Chapter 9 discusses how quality assurance at the national and global levels are linked and is aimed at national Governments and international organizations as readers.

7. New data and statistics providers are emerging, expanding the range of data sources available, fuelled by technological advances and new demands for detailed and timely data for policymaking in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This newly emerging data ecosystem presents challenges and opportunities for official statistics. The manual provides guidance for developing and implementing a national quality assurance framework and aims at addressing quality assurance in different circumstances and situations, thereby supporting countries in safeguarding the role of official statistics as a trusted source of information, while considering the new data sources in a changing environment.

8. Specifically, the manual is directed at ensuring the quality of official statistics throughout the entire national statistical system, typically consisting of the national statistical office and other producers of a country's official statistics. The manual also provides guidance for engagement with statistics producers and data providers[1] that

[1] The United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics distinguishes between data providers that provide input to the statistics production process (such as owners of surveys data, administrative data and other forms of data) and statistics producers that produce statistical output. Respondents to surveys and censuses are also data providers, but unless specified, the manual follows a narrower definition and only considers owners of data to be data providers.

are outside the national statistical system but cooperate with members of the system in the production of official statistics by, for example, addressing quality assurance in the use of different data sources (chapter 7) and in Sustainable Development Goal indicator data and statistics (chapter 8). The manual thus responds to the challenges posed by the new data ecosystem, which is characterized by the emergence of new data sources, new data providers and new statistics producers.

9. Moreover, the manual does not aim to replace any existing statistical quality assurance frameworks or guidelines. Countries and other entities that are already fully engaged in quality assurance by following one of the existing frameworks may view the manual as an additional reference that supports what they are already doing and as a source of information on the application of quality assurance in different situations.

10. Each chapter of the manual can be read independently, thereby offering different entry points to the topic of quality assurance for official statistics. The updated United Nations framework in chapter 3 is based on the template and guidelines for a generic national quality assurance framework of 2012. The template and guidelines were reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect the emergence of an enlarged data ecosystem with potential new data sources, data providers, technologies and methods.

IV. Results of the survey on the implementation of a national quality assurance framework

11. One of the tasks of the Expert Group was to assess the implementation of the template and guidelines for a generic national quality assurance framework of 2012. Therefore, the Expert Group designed an online questionnaire to collect information regarding the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks in countries. An official invitation to complete the questionnaire was sent to all Member States in December 2017 and the survey was closed in April 2018. The overall response rate to the survey was 65 per cent (127 countries in total), with the highest regional response rate being that of Europe (above 85 per cent). A report provided to the Commission as a background document presents the detailed results of the survey, which will be further analysed by the Expert Group when developing and further elaborating its plan to support countries in the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks.

12. Among the countries that responded to the survey, 60 per cent indicated having implemented a national quality assurance framework, with the highest regional rate of implementation being that of Europe, at almost 90 per cent. According to the responses, the framework most widely used as a basis for the national quality assurance framework was the European Statistics Code of Practice, followed by the template and guidelines for a generic national quality assurance framework (about 70 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively), with regional frameworks usually being used widely within their respective regions. In most countries that responded to the survey, the national quality assurance framework covered the whole national statistical system, with the highest percentages of countries doing so being in Africa and Europe. In addition, approximately 50 per cent of countries around the world apply their national quality assurance frameworks to data used to calculate Sustainable Development Goal indicators, with the highest regional rate being that of Europe. Close to 60 per cent of countries apply their quality frameworks to data obtained from alternative new sources, with the highest regional rate again being that of Europe.

13. Furthermore, the survey shows that a substantial number of countries do not have yet a national quality assurance framework. The main reasons for their not having implemented a national quality assurance framework include a lack of

financial and/or human resources, a lack of training resources and a lack of subject matter support. Among the greatest demands in terms of assistance required to develop and implement a national quality assurance framework is the need for proper instruments for quality assurance and the support for their implementation. In addition, Member States require hands-on technical materials and guidance, workshops or specific advisory services and assistance in assessing the current situation. Although the need for additional human resources is not as great, they are still needed by more than half of the respondents that indicated that they do not have a national quality assurance framework.

14. The survey also contained two open questions related to the current work on updating the template and guidelines for a generic national quality assurance framework of 2012 and on the work of the Expert Group in general.

V. Initial proposal for an implementation plan for the period 2019–2023

15. At its face-to-face meeting held from 29 October to 1 November 2018, the Expert Group discussed an initial proposal for a plan to support countries in the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks for their entire national statistical systems, as envisioned in the manual. The implementation plan would cover the period 2019–2023 in order to provide a sufficient time horizon for additional countries to implement a national quality assurance framework or to extend the scope of their current activities based on the manual. While the implementation of a national quality assurance framework is the responsibility of the statistical agency in each country, the Expert Group identified the following activities at the global level to support countries in that regard:

(a) The completion, dissemination and promotion of the manual;

(b) The further updating of the information on quality assurance on the website of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, including with additional information on country experiences and good practices;

(c) The establishment of an expert forum and/or a community of practice and/or a network of experts;

(d) The development of materials to supplement the manual that support the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks, such as case studies, best practices and a roadmap;

(e) The sharing or development of training materials and additional guidance and tools, such as for the self-assessment of statistical agencies, as required;

(f) The sharing of information and experiences in technical assistance and training efforts, and possible coordination of or cooperation in those efforts.[2]

[2] Countries that require external technical and financial assistance for quality assurance should request such assistance from their partners.

VI. Programme of work of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks

16. It is suggested that the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks carry out the following activities over the next two years (2019 and 2020) in support of the implementation of the manual:

(a) Complete and promote the manual and support its translation into the official languages of the United Nations;

(b) Further develop a plan to support countries in the implementation of a national quality assurance framework throughout the national statistical system, and take steps towards the plan's implementation;

(c) Maintain and further update the information on quality assurance on the website of the Statistics Division and establish an expert forum and/or a community of practice and/or a network of experts;

(d) Further develop supporting or instructional materials as required;

(e) Further assess the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks in countries;

(f) Report back to the Statistical Commission in March 2021.

VII. Points for discussion

17. **The Statistical Commission is invited:**

(a) **To comment on the report and the work done by the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks over the last two years, including its survey on the implementation of national quality assurance framework in countries, and the survey's findings and conclusions;**

(b) **To express its views on the proposed programme of work of the Expert Group for the next two years and endorse its updated terms of reference (see annex);**

(c) **To express its views on the initial proposal for a plan to support countries in the implementation of a national quality assurance framework;**

(d) **To review and adopt the United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics.**

Annex

Updated terms of reference of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks

1. The Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks will:

(a) Complete and promote the United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics and support its translation into the official languages of the United Nations;

(b) Further develop a plan to support countries in the implementation of a national quality assurance framework throughout the national statistical system, and take steps towards the plan's implementation;

(c) Maintain and further update the information on quality assurance on the website of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and establish an expert forum and/or a community of practice and/or a network of experts;

(d) Further develop supporting or instructional materials as required;

(e) Further assess the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks in countries;

(f) Report back to the Statistical Commission in March 2021.

2. The Expert Group consists of its current members and observers and is open to a limited number of additional countries and organizations that wish to join its work, while ensuring balanced regional representation. Member States will elect two Co-Chairs. The Statistics Division will act as the secretariat of the Expert Group.

3. The Expert Group will conduct its work electronically but will meet face-to-face should the possibility and need arise. Participation in the Expert Group is self-funded.

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Item 3 (e) of the provisional agenda*
Items for discussion and decision: regional statistical development

Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistical development in Asia and the Pacific

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistical development in Asia and the Pacific.

* E/CN.3/2019/1.

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Report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on statistical development in Asia and the Pacific

Summary

In 2016, countries across the Asia-Pacific region agreed to make national statistical capacity development a shared vision for all and agreed to act collectively in five action areas to ensure a coordinated approach. In 2018, in support of that shared vision and such collective action, countries across the region adopted a declaration reflecting their respective commitments to support national statistical systems through political, institutional and financial means.

The present report provides an overview of national, regional and global issues shaping national statistical capacity development in Asia and the Pacific, in particular in the light of the fact that 2020, the target year for 21 of the 169 global targets adopted under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is fast approaching. In the report, ESCAP summarizes the prevailing challenges faced by countries in the Asia-Pacific region with respect to strengthening national statistical systems and supporting national, regional and global agendas and highlights five action areas addressing those challenges: engaging users and investing in statistics; ensuring the quality of and thereby building trust in statistics; using integrated statistics for comprehensive analysis; modernizing statistical business processes; and developing the requisite skill sets.

In the report, ESCAP addresses skills development through training partnerships, joint advocacy efforts for strengthened statistical systems, public-private partnerships and innovation, among other means. It also describes regional coordination mechanisms that are being leveraged for coordinated national statistical capacity development efforts.

The report concludes with recommendations for scaling up international commitment, support and coordination for statistical development in Asia and the Pacific in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

I. Introduction

1. The previous report of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on regional statistical development in Asia and the Pacific (E/CN.3/2014/15), issued on 18 December 2013, was submitted to the Statistical Commission for consideration at its forty-fifth session held in March 2014. The report provided an overview of challenges facing countries in the region with regard to the development agenda beyond 2015. In its report, ESCAP posited that, in order to meet compounding demands placed on national statistical systems, statistics needed to be positioned as a development objective in their own right and should be included as a goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

2. The deliberations of the Statistical Commission led to revived attention from countries across the region on the importance of strengthening national statistical systems as an integral part of national development. In line with the reflections in the previous report by ESCAP and the subsequent deliberations of the Statistical Commission, in 2016, the Asia-Pacific statistical community adopted a collective vision and framework for action to advance official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1). That commitment was strengthened in 2018 by the adoption of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind (ESCAP/CST/2018/7) during a high-level segment attended by policymakers of the sixth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. The Declaration is available in four languages on the website of the Statistical Commission, as a background document.

3. The Asia-Pacific region is home to 58 ESCAP members and associate members,[1] from Turkey in the west to the Pacific islands in the east, the Russian Federation in the North and New Zealand in the South. The region is also home to 6 of the 10 largest countries by population size, and 3 of the 10 smallest. Chief Statisticians oversee centralized and decentralized statistical systems, statistical systems with and without statistical laws, with staff sizes as small as 3 and as large as 14,000.[2]

4. As of 2018, national statistical systems in the Asia-Pacific region have contributed 24 voluntary national reviews to the high-level political forum on sustainable development as part of their countries' efforts towards implementing the 2030 Agenda. Three national statistical systems are poised to contribute to their countries' second voluntary national review in 2019, often using data sources that have a ten-year periodicity, such as population and housing censuses, thereby bringing new challenges relating to the monitoring of progress, owing to the unavailability of more current data.

5. The present report covers statistical development activities being undertaken in Asia and the Pacific in support of strengthened national statistical systems, in line with the collective vision and framework for action, the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/73/31, annex II) and the 2030 Agenda itself. The report outlines challenges facing statistical systems in Asia and the Pacific and some key initiatives taken to assist in strengthening them.

6. Countries have agreed on a number of global and regional targets to be attained by 2020, such as improved capacity of national statistical systems to produce and disseminate basic economic statistics, in line with international standards (Regional

[1] The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has 53 member States and 9 associate members. Four member States are not located in the Asia-Pacific region.

[2] Staff sizes are derived from the findings of a 2013 capacity screening exercise conducted to measure the status of economic statistics in the Asia-Pacific region.

Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific), a midpoint review of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015–2024 (Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific) and a total of 21 Sustainable Development Goal targets.[3] With 2020 fast approaching, countries need to accelerate collective efforts and leverage national, regional and global efforts. The report therefore addresses the prevailing challenges in ensuring coordination at all levels.

7. In concluding, ESCAP proposes actions to be taken by the Statistical Commission in order to scale up international commitment and support for statistical development in Asia and the Pacific, both globally, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and regionally, in the context of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

II. National, regional and global agendas

National agendas

8. In October 2018, members of the statistical community of Asia and the Pacific were joined by higher-level policymakers at the sixth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics and adopted the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, in which member States and associate members:

(a) Committed to integrating statistics development with national development policies and plans;

(b) Committed to strengthening and developing, where appropriate, a national monitoring framework and to integrating the framework into planning and budgeting processes;

(c) Committed to establishing a high-level advisory body, where appropriate, to support the national statistical system;

(d) Committed to specifying the roles and responsibilities of the national statistical system;

(e) Resolved to empower heads of national statistical offices to assume the lead role in developing and coordinating their respective integrated national statistical systems;

(f) Endeavoured to strengthen necessary legislative provisions and institutional mechanisms;

(g) Resolved to improve communication with regard to statistics and to strengthen statistical literacy and culture;

(h) Committed to advocating the expanded use of official statistics for evidence-based policymaking and transparent governance;

(i) Committed to revisiting national policies and strategies, as appropriate.

9. In the Declaration, member States and associate members recognized that, in the Asia-Pacific region, a large number of national statistical systems continued to struggle to produce and disseminate basic ranges of economic, environmental and social statistics. That fact was underscored by the ESCAP Statistics Division in the

[3] Of 169 global targets, 59 have a global target year of 2030, 21 are targeted for 2020, 3 have different target years (2017 and 2025), and the remaining 86 have no set deadline for achievement.

Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2017,[4] in which it reported that regionally consistent indicators were only available for 25 per cent of the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

10. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) reports on the status of national strategies for the development of statistics in countries across the world. PARIS21 categorizes such strategies by dividing them into two main groups: one for existing strategies and the other for future strategies. In general, countries in the region have such national strategies in place, albeit at various stages of implementation. Of the 37 ESCAP member States included in the 2017 PARIS21 report,[5] 41 per cent have a national strategy in the implementation phase, 14 per cent have a national strategy that is completed but still awaiting adoption, 22 per cent have an expired national strategy and 24 per cent have no national strategy for the development of statistics. Of the nine ESCAP member States with no national strategy, 44 per cent have no plans to design one.

11. In terms of open data, the Asia-Pacific region is more or less on par with the global average for coverage and openness, according to the 2017 Open Data Inventory.[6] Nevertheless, there is a wide dispersion among the coverage and openness scores of the 45 member States and associate members[7] for which data were available and, for some, the status of coverage and openness of official statistics lags considerably behind regional and global averages. the global and regional averages for coverage of 36.4 and 36.9, respectively, while the minimum country-level value stands at 11.5 and the maximum is 60 (figure I). The global and regional openness scores are 45.9 and 45.2, respectively, but the dispersion is wider, with the minimum country-level value standing at 17.5 and the maximum at 87.5 (figure II).

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.F.12.

[5] Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, "National strategies for the development of statistics: progress report 2017", February 2017.

[6] Coverage scores are based on the availability of key indicators and of appropriate disaggregation over time and for geographic subdivisions. Openness scores are based on whether data can be downloaded in machine-readable and non-proprietary formats; whether they are accompanied by metadata; whether download options exist, such as bulk download, user-selection or application programming interfaces; and whether the data have an open term of use.

[7] Data were not available for the following 13 member States and associate members: American Samoa, Brunei Darussalam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, French Polynesia, Guam, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu.

Figure I
Status of Open Data Inventory coverage score for 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific region as compared with the regional average

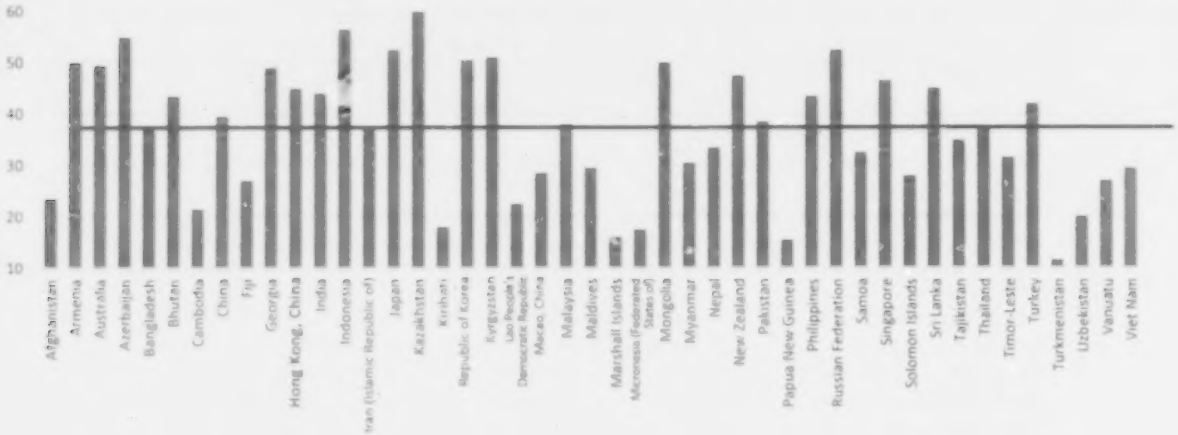
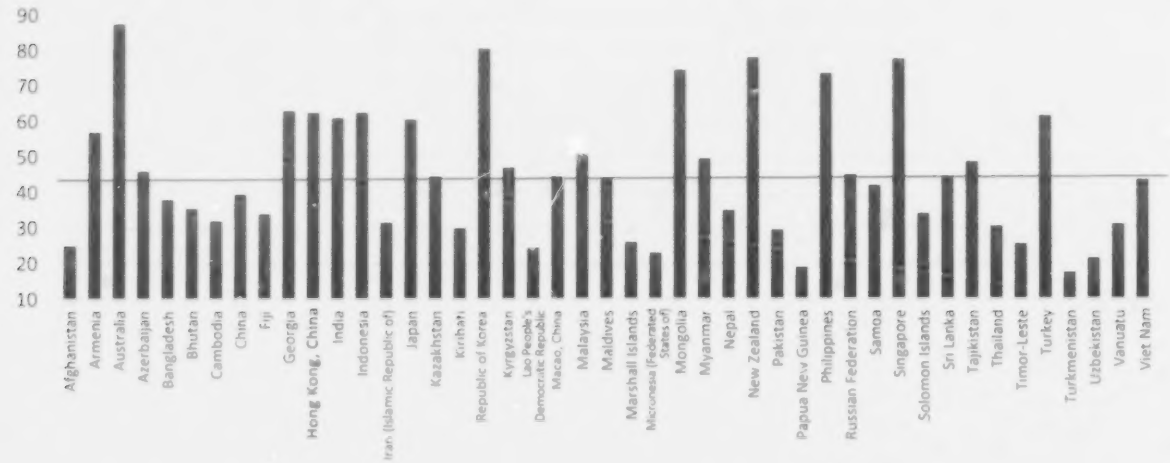


Figure II
Status of Open Data Inventory openness score for 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific region as compared with the regional average



12. In 2017, a screening exercise was conducted as part of the ESCAP Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific to assess the status of the production and dissemination of economic statistics in the region. In all, 50 countries participated in the screening exercise. Respondents answered questions on statistical infrastructure and on institutional aspects of their national statistical systems such as statistical law, standards and classifications,

organizational structure, quality assurance, statistical registers, censuses and surveys, human resources and statistical training.[8]

13. All but one of the 50 respondents reported having a statistical act in place in 2017. All 49 statistical acts include provisions on the protection of confidentiality of respondents' information, while 47 include provisions on transparency and 46 have provisions to protect the professional independence of official statistics agencies. Of the 49 statistical acts, 36 were reported to include provisions allowing agencies in the national statistical system to acquire administrative data for statistical purposes. Twenty-five respondents indicated that their country's Government planned to change the statistical act. The most common reason cited for the intended change was that the current statistical act did not provide sufficient access to administrative data (see ESCAP/CST/2018/INF/4).

Regional agenda

14. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region have developed and agreed to a regional road map to facilitate cooperation at the regional level for implementing the 2030 Agenda, supported by the ESCAP secretariat and other United Nations entities. The road map was agreed during the fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, held in 2017, and subsequently endorsed by ESCAP in its resolution 73/9.

15. In the road map, ESCAP members identify priority areas of regional cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Those priority areas underline the major challenges still faced in the Asia-Pacific region, including leaving no one behind; disaster risk reduction and resilience; climate change; the management of natural resources; connectivity; and energy. Priority areas for cooperation under means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda are also identified in the road map and include data and statistics, technology, finance, policy coherence and partnerships.

16. With regard to data and statistics, according to the roadmap, it will be impossible to review progress on Sustainable Development Goal implementation and, consequently, improve performance without credible figures and indicators. And since 88 of the 232 global Sustainable Development Goal indicators lacked methodological guidelines or standards at the time the road map was endorsed in May 2017, the road map contains a call for urgent action to strengthen the statistical capacities of member States.

17. The road map outlines the following five opportunities for regional cooperation:

(a) Promote the need for national statistical systems to be responsive to the requirements of users arising from the 2030 Agenda, and the need to encourage investments in national statistical systems that are adequate to meet statistical requirements and to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as appropriate;

(b) Formulate and implement continuous, comprehensive and system-wide strategies for the development of statistics, including statistics for the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Provide and promote capacity-building support to national statistical systems to increase the availability of high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, including through the development of integrated measurement frameworks for Sustainable Development Goal statistics that integrate data from

[8] ESCAP, Statistics Division, "Report on the capacity screening of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific 2017", October 2018. Available at http://communities.unescap.org/system/files/capacity_screening_2017_-_final_rev.pdf.

multiple sources, including big data, in a coherent and consistent manner to support the comprehensive analysis of sustainable development issues;

(d) Organize national statistical system business processes and modernize tools for strengthened quality, efficiency and effectiveness of statistical information management and exchange;

(e) Build the skills of the staff and management of national statistical systems, including of relevant data producers, to enhance the human resources capacity for generating the statistical products and services required for the monitoring of national development plans and the 2030 Agenda.

18. The road map builds on the collective vision and framework for action adopted in 2016 by the ESCAP Committee of Statistics and endorsed by ESCAP in 2017. In the collective vision and framework for action, the Asia-Pacific statistical community recognizes the need to transform its understanding of the core business of official statistics from the production of time series and tables to the provision of statistical products and services more directly tailored to the needs of users.

19. In the collective vision, the Asia-Pacific statistical community communicates its shared ambition leading up to the year 2030. The framework for action translates that vision into collective action in priority areas that include advocacy, investment, user engagement and the enabling of the production and use of integrated statistics through methodological work, the modernization of business processes and the strengthening of skills.

20. In its collective vision, the Asia-Pacific statistical community, consisting of the leaders of national statistical systems and development partners active in the region, shared its vision that, by 2030, national statistical systems would be enabled and empowered to lead the development of and deliver innovative, trusted and timely products and services for the urgent and evolving statistical requirements of the 2030 Agenda. The community also stated that a transformed national statistical system was one in which:

(a) The skills base of staff in statistical institutions transcend traditional disciplines;

(b) Statistical organizations, through modernized statistical business processes, were purveyors of information in the era of big data;

(c) Legal and institutional structures firmly supported the application of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics[9] in guiding statistical management and development in a changing environment of increased demands, new data sources and complex uses of statistics;

(d) Relationships with users of statistical products and services were recast with the clients as their focus.

21. In the framework for action, the statistical community agreed to focus its collaborative efforts on the following action areas:

(a) Action area A: engaging users and investing in statistics

(b) Action area B: ensuring the quality of and building trust in statistics

(c) Action area C: using integrated statistics for comprehensive analysis

[9] The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics were adopted by the Economic and Social Council through its resolution 2013/21 and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly through its resolution 68/261.

(d) Action area D: modernizing statistical business processes

(e) Action area E: developing the requisite skill sets

Global agenda

22. In the 2030 Agenda, States Members of the United Nations committed to engaging in the systematic follow-up and review of its implementation between 2015 and 2030. Developing countries, in particular African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, would be supported in strengthening the capacity of their national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data. Transparent and accountable scaling-up of appropriate public-private cooperation would be promoted in order to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including earth observation and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress.[10]

23. The ESCAP regional road map and the collective vision and framework for action directly support strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely and reliable data, disaggregated by relevant characteristics.

24. However, more can be done to promote the transparent and accountable scaling-up of appropriate public-private cooperation in order to exploit the contribution of a wide range of data, including earth observation and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress. Plans for achieving that objective are discussed in section III below.

25. The objective of reducing the risk of impact caused by disasters features prominently in the 2030 Agenda, and relevant targets and indicators are included in Goals 1, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, 11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and 13, to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Global indicators relating to disaster risk reduction are fully aligned with the agreed indicators for monitoring the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, adopted in 2015.

26. Current United Nations reforms are repositioning the United Nations development system to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see General Assembly resolution 72/279).

27. Support for the development of data and statistics for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is emerging as a key priority in many countries. The field has been identified as a development priority in country-specific United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

28. ESCAP is responding by aligning its country-level activities to meet that need, including by providing direct support to national statistical offices, as well as support to and through United Nations resident coordinators and country teams. To that end, a position of regional adviser for official statistics for the 2030 Agenda has been created to be a focal point for single-country data and statistics support.

[10] General Assembly resolution 70/1, paras. 72 and 76.

III. Looking ahead, 2019–2024

Action area A: engaging users and investing in statistics

29. Outreach, user engagement and investing in statistics are critical to strengthening national statistical systems.

30. Following the successful trial of the Every Policy Is Connected (EPIC) tool in the Philippines and in Samoa, the ESCAP Committee on Statistics has endorsed it as a generic tool to enhance user-producer engagement in order to establish effective demand for data at the national level in the context of the 2030 Agenda. Future plans are to invest in streamlining the tool with an app and to continue to apply it in other areas, not just social policies and gender policies. Geospatial policies are one possible area for consideration. All members of the Statistical Commission are invited to explore the use of the tool for engaging users and investing in statistics.

31. Disaster-related statistics is one area in particular where ESCAP is pioneering and actively contributing to global statistical standards. The Disaster-related Statistics Framework for Asia and the Pacific was designed collaboratively by statistics users and producers, making it an example for the implementation of the principle of user engagement outlined in the collective vision and framework for action. The Framework includes detailed descriptions of the uses of the standard products of statistical offices, such as censuses and surveys, for the development of evidence-based disaster risk reduction policies.

32. Acknowledging the contribution of ESCAP to the development of recommendations and guidance on disaster-related statistics, the Statistical Commission, at its forty-ninth session, decided to step up global efforts in that regard by building on existing work by ESCAP and others. ESCAP is currently working with the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to bring the Disaster-related Statistics Framework for Asia and the Pacific to the global level at the fifty-first session of the Statistical Commission. Their progress is outlined in the following reports: ESCAP/74/24 and E/CN.3/2019/16.

33. In 2020, ESCAP will host a ministerial conference to mark the midterm review of the aim to "get everyone in the picture" as part of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015–2024. Noting that civil registration systems are, could be and should be the source of some 67 global Sustainable Development Goal indicators,[11] ESCAP is exploring advocacy efforts to bring greater attention to the importance of well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems. The 2019 high-level political forum and the 2019 World Economic Forum are two events that ESCAP and its partners are discussing.

34. In terms of investing in statistics, several statistical development activities are underway or planned in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP has worked with member States to pilot the use of geospatial data, integrated with official statistics, in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.[12] That work was presented in 2018 at the Conference of the International Association for Official Statistics on Better Statistics for Better Lives, jointly organized with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and received positive feedback and considerable interest. ESCAP is also directly supporting several national statistics offices in their trials on the use of mobile

[11] See Samuel Mills and others, *Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) for Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs)*, paper prepared for the World Bank eLearning course on civil registration and vital statistics systems, May 2017.

[12] See ESCAP, Statistics Division, "Report on the capacity screening of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific 2017".

phone data for official statistics. ESCAP has undertaken research on integrating household survey and census data to support poverty measurement and jointly hosted a regional workshop on the use of earth observations for official statistics with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

35. Nevertheless, member States are looking for more. National statistical offices would like, or are being asked by their Ministers, to exploit a range of data, including administrative, scanner, mobile phone and geospatial data. Several Asian countries are members of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, which provides welcome leadership in that field, and ESCAP is actively promoting the activities of the Global Working Group to the wider statistical community in Asia and the Pacific. As a member of the Group, ESCAP wove the use of a wide range of data sources into each of its four contributions to the United Nations World Data Forum, held in 2018. ESCAP is also jointly organizing a side event with the Statistics Division, to be held in Malaysia in 2019, on the margins of the sixty-second International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress, in order to share knowledge and build skills across Asia and the Pacific in the use of big data sources for official statistics. A special topic session has also been organized for the Congress in 2019. In 2019, at the Asia Pacific Economic Statistics Week, an annual forum to produce and share practical research on improving economic statistics, emphasis will be placed on papers that demonstrate the use of alternative data sources for official statistics.

36. Public-private partnerships are also needed. In that regard, the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) official statistics modernization programme providing grants for the 2020 round of population censuses, has been promoted by ESCAP to its member States and associate members. ESCAP also welcomes the support provided by the Research Institute for the geospatial and statistical work done on oceans, as well as its federated system of data hubs for the Sustainable Development Goals. ESCAP will also be promoting and seeking partnerships, for example through twinning arrangements and South-South cooperation, to support the Asia-Pacific statistical community in exploiting the use of a range of data for official statistics.

37. As a regional commission, ESCAP showcases regional progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda. In 2017, only 25 per cent of the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators could be reported on at the regional level, leaving a long way to go to address gaps in official statistics for the measurement and full understanding of progress made towards 2030 Agenda implementation. Using a greater range of data sources for the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators is one means to achieve that objective. Using a wider range of statistics, in addition to those traditionally considered for official statistics, is another option.

38. As presented in the *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2017*, ESCAP tested the use of six proxy indicators from official statistical sources where official global Sustainable Development Goal indicators are still under development. In the 2018 report, ESCAP will present an analysis of situations in which a wider range of data sources could be used for Sustainable Development Goal reporting purposes.

39. Countries and development partners in Asia and the Pacific are also seeking advice and assistance with regard to a significant user engagement challenge: reporting on and communicating progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

40. The United Nations issues many types of reports and communicates progress in a number of ways, including globally, sectorally and regionally. For instance, in *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*,[13] a descriptive statistical analysis of

[13] United Nations publications, Sales No. E.18.I.6.

selected global indicators is presented for each of the 17 Goals. In the *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2017*, the ESCAP Statistics Division presents an analysis of progress made towards the regional achievement of the Goals and targets, based mainly on the global indicators, as well as on a small number of proxy indicators from official data sources where insufficient data were available for a given Goal.

41. Other reports include the report by Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network on the Sustainable Development Goals index and dashboards,[14] in which a ranking of country-level achievement of the 2030 Agenda is presented using a combination of the global indicators and indicators and statistics from both official and non-official data sources.

42. While those reports address the various needs of decision makers, they pose challenges to the country-led nature of the 2030 Agenda and to the production of coherent progress narratives. To that end, ESCAP is working with countries to build their reporting and communication skills. ESCAP is also providing tools and progress measurement methods to enhance follow-up and review capacities at the country and regional levels for Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators. In addition, in March 2019, ESCAP will be releasing a regional gateway to the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators and a tool for countries to self-assess their progress against Goal targets.

43. ESCAP is also working within the United Nations system, including with the regional United Nations sustainable development group for Asia and the Pacific, to present tools and methodologies to United Nations country teams. ESCAP takes an active role in discussions with country teams on the different types of reporting that exist, the advantages and disadvantages of each and the issues that can arise therefrom. Discussion topics may include country rankings, the use of non-official data sources and divergence from the global Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

44. ESCAP is partnering with the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics to discuss reporting and communication for the 2030 Agenda. It invites the Commission to discuss navigating the various reporting and communication challenges given that coherence is a global, regional and national issue.

45. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics and ESCAP itself are key intergovernmental forums for engaging with users and investing in statistics. In adopting the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, ESCAP agreed:

(a) To support member States in their efforts to implement the collective vision and framework for action in an integrated manner and in the light of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) To continue its engagement with development partners and other relevant stakeholders, in order to ensure the ongoing, coordinated and effective implementation of the Declaration and the collective vision and framework for action;

(c) To prepare an overview of progress in implementing the Declaration, every two years, for review by the Committee on Statistics;

[14] Jeffrey Sachs and others, *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018: Global Responsibilities – Implementing the Goals* (Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, New York, 2018)

(d) To submit the outcome of the high-level segment of the sixth session of the Committee on Statistics, including the Declaration, to ESCAP at its seventy-fifth session, to be held in 2019;

(e) To organize a midpoint conference in 2024, as appropriate, to gauge the extent of success and to reflect on its commitment.

Action area B: ensuring the quality of and building trust in statistics

46. Since 2012, ESCAP has been involved in the discussion among global experts regarding the development and implementation of, and capacity-building for, a generic national quality assurance framework. Currently, ESCAP is actively engaged in the expert discussions on updating the generic framework and on developing a United Nations manual for its implementation (see E/CN.3/2019/6).

47. Trust in official statistics is fundamental to our business. A special session held in 2018, in conjunction with the Conference of the International Association for Official Statistics, brought together members of the official statistical community to discuss the importance of ensuring the quality of and building trust in statistics as a foundation of demand for statistics. The Asia-Pacific region is no exception to that value and therefore continues to pursue efforts to build trust in national statistical systems and official statistics.

48. ESCAP will be working with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on a new thematic seminar series of regional conferences on managing statistical offices in times of change. The conferences will bring together chief statisticians from across the region to share their experiences and knowledge so as to prepare for the ever-growing needs of national statistical systems.

49. The field of civil registration and vital statistics is a particular area where building trust is needed. Many vital statistics in the Asia-Pacific region continue to be sourced from surveys. ESCAP will continue to advocate the production of vital statistics using data from civil registration systems, including with global partners.

50. Developments in the area of legal identity systems have the potential to affect trust in civil registration and vital statistic systems. ESCAP is keeping a watchful eye on developments with regard to legal identity systems, as well as on the ongoing progress being made across Africa and other regions, and is reinforcing the importance of trusted and well-functioning civil registration systems for official statistics.

Action area C: using integrated statistics for comprehensive analysis

51. The ocean is vital to the global climate and economy, but it is being degraded by overfishing, pollution and climate change. Policies affecting the ocean are as fragmented as the existing data on the subject. Unified ocean governance needs unified ocean accounts. ESCAP is pioneering a partnership-building initiative for the development of ocean accounts based on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). ESCAP is leveraging its convening role to build partnerships in order to enhance awareness and understanding of ocean-related issues and to accelerate action for a healthy ocean. At its forty-ninth session, the Statistical Commission accepted the offer made by ESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme to lead the development of statistical guidance on ocean accounts as part of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting revision process (see E/CN.3/2019/15).

52. ESCAP is currently strengthening its activities in support of data integration. Specifically, it is expanding its activities with member States to build their capacity to integrate traditional data sources, such as survey, census and administrative data, with each other and with a wider range of data, such as scanner, geospatial and mobile phone data, for official statistics.

53. ESCAP welcomes the support of development partnerships in those areas, in particular the support provided by partners of national statistical offices in twinning with countries in the region to build knowledge, skills and capabilities.

Action area D: modernizing statistical business processes

54. As highlighted in the collective vision and framework for action, ESCAP has prioritized the modernization of statistical systems. ESCAP support in that regard is focused on three areas: strengthening business registers; increasing the quality and coverage of civil registration systems; and improving the technical capacity of countries to exchange data and metadata. To that end, ESCAP collaborated with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to host a regional Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) workshop in December 2018.

55. ESCAP has initiated efforts to support countries in modernizing their statistical business processes. In 2018, ESCAP helped a member State to participate in a workshop for trainers to learn about SDMX and subsequently transfer that knowledge to other colleagues in the national statistical system. Experts from national statistical offices, central banks, international agencies and the private sector collaborated to identify and resolve issues and work towards the development of a standard. Work on modernizing statistical business processes in the region is expected to accelerate as a result of such knowledge-sharing and collaboration among the various stakeholders.

56. ESCAP will also be increasing its overall focus on modernizing statistical business. In particular, as noted earlier, several statistical development activities are underway or planned in Asia and the Pacific to promote the transparent and accountable scaling-up of appropriate public-private cooperation in order to exploit the contribution of a wide range of data to the 2030 Agenda, including earth observation and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress. If successful, ESCAP expects to see a wider range of data used for official statistics in country-led voluntary national reviews and in future editions of the *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report*. Its member States and associate members are keen, and the continued support of global partners, in particular the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, is greatly appreciated. Twinning and South-South cooperation would also be very welcome.

Action area E: developing the requisite skill sets

57. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), a regional institution of ESCAP, is mandated to strengthen, through the provision of practical training to official statisticians, the capability of developing members and associate members, as well as of economies in transition in the region, to collect, analyse and disseminate statistics and to produce timely and high-quality statistics that can be utilized for economic and social development planning. It is also mandated to assist those developing members and associate members and economies in transition in

establishing or strengthening their statistical training capability and other related activities.[15]

58. Since the Institute was established in 1970, ESCAP member States have relied on it to be effective, efficient and dynamic in providing, leading and coordinating statistical training in the region. At its seventy-fourth session in May 2018, ESCAP expressed appreciation for the work of the Institute, including the statistical training it had provided in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ESCAP suggested further strengthening the Institute's stream of work, including through additional e-learning courses on indicators for measuring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and training on disaster- and climate change-related statistics and on the application and use of geographic information systems and big data to produce official statistics (E/ESCAP/74/44, para. 132).

59. The Institute's training programmes are aligned with the collective vision and framework for action and the regional road map.

60. Through the Institute and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCAP is working to strengthen the network of training institutes in Asia and the Pacific. In that regard, the Institute and the Division are collaborating with the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (Rosstat) and the Higher School of Economics at the National Research University in Moscow on the development and delivery of face-to-face and distance training programmes in the Russian language, to meet the needs of Central Asian countries. In collaboration with the Pacific subregional office of ESCAP, the Institute and the Division are also developing a programme with the University of the South Pacific, with three potential areas of focus: official statistics, environmental statistics and the Sustainable Development Goal indicators for countries in the Pacific region.

IV. Collaboration and coordination

61. One of the key principles of the collective vision and framework for action is to realign and sharpen the focus of existing collaborative initiatives towards accelerating progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Using that principle as a guiding rule, ESCAP also continues to be guided by several regional capacity development initiatives overseen by member States and international organizations. These organizations include the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics, the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Steering Committee for Asia and the Pacific for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

62. Virtual communities of practice will be established, following the identification of regional mechanisms on integrated statistics and innovation as a priority by the Asia-Pacific statistical community at the sixth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

63. In 2013, the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics established the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, the membership of which now includes 25 countries and international organizations. Although the Network is facing some challenges in terms of commitment from members and the implementation of targets, ESCAP is working with it to expedite knowledge-sharing

[15] See Council resolution 2005/36, annex, para. 4.

through the sharing of training materials as well as by expanding the scope of training subjects (see ESCAP/CST/2018/4).

64. In addition to working with the steering groups, ESCAP is collaborating with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, through the Global Strategy to Improve Agriculture and Rural Statistics, and with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in a number of thematic areas, such as ocean accounts, disaster-related statistics and big data. The Division is a member of all regional steering groups in the Asia-Pacific region.

65. At the regional level, ESCAP leverages the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism to facilitate a coordinated approach for statistical capacity development among member States, through thematic working groups on statistics, disaster risk reduction, resilience for disaster-related statistics and statistics relating to gender equality and women's empowerment.

66. In order to help improve coordination at the regional level, in adopting the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, member States and associate members in Asia and the Pacific called upon development partners:

(a) To provide coordinated technical, financial, technological and capacity-building assistance to countries and to ensure that countries have full access to data held by development partners in support of the implementation of the collective vision and framework for action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) To consult the national statistical office or national statistical system concerned before conducting any statistical study or survey;

(c) To continue to develop and strengthen international statistical standards and to provide technical support for their implementation.

V. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

67. The Statistical Commission is invited to:

(a) Discuss the global relevance of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind issued by the Asia-Pacific statistical community and to consider recommending the Declaration for adoption by the Economic and Social Council as a critical means for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(b) Take note of the progress made by countries in Asia and the Pacific and by development partners to implement the collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community for advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to discuss the approaches outlined therein for advancing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, in particular:

(i) Through collaboration to strengthen national statistical systems in order to exploit a range of data sources and methods for official statistics and to address availability challenges with the global Sustainable Development Goal indictors, thereby leapfrogging the era of sample survey reliance, where appropriate (see paragraphs 34–36);

(i') By navigating the challenges relating to Sustainable Development Goal reporting and communication to ensure the production of trusted and coherent progress narratives at the national, regional and global levels (see paragraphs 37–44);

(c) Support the call by member States in Asia and the Pacific for development partners to:

(i) Provide coordinated technical, financial, technological and capacity-building assistance to countries;

(ii) Ensure that countries have full access to data held by development partners;

(iii) Consult the national statistical office or national statistical system concerned before conducting any statistical study or survey;

(iv) Continue to develop and strengthen international statistical standards and provide technical support for their implementation.